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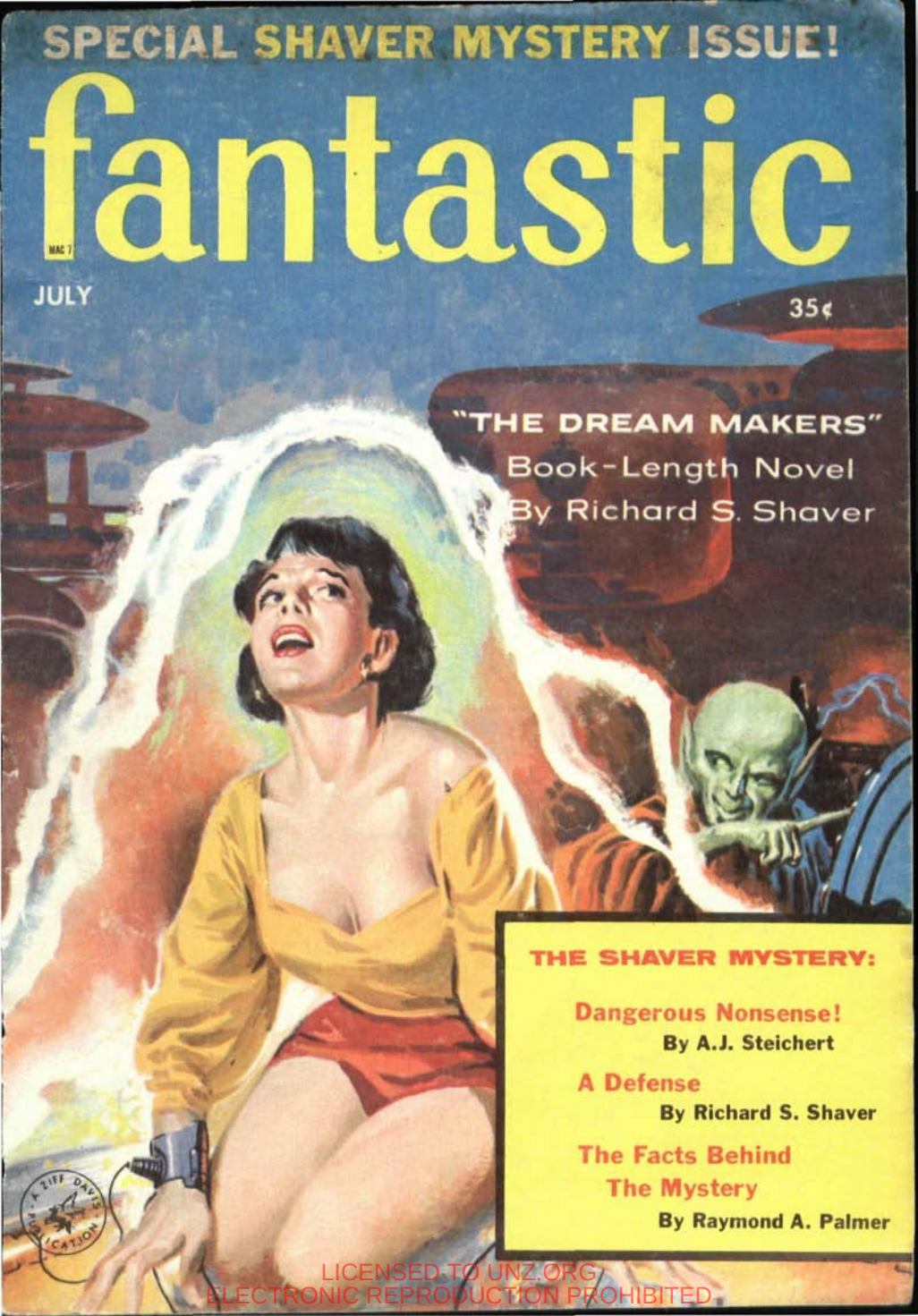
By Richard S. Shaver



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Publisher
MICHAEL MICHAELSON

Editor
PAUL W. FAIRMAN

Managing Editor
CELE GOLDSMITH

Art Editor
SID GREIFF

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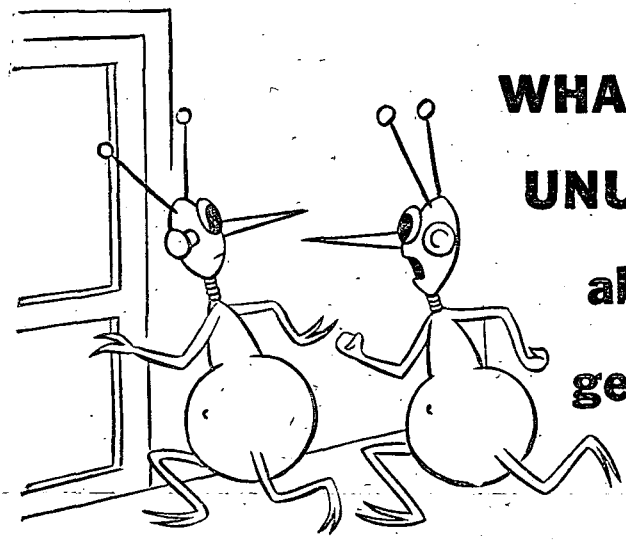

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THE EDITOR'S VIEWPOINT

It is not without careful thought and extreme reluctance that we violate the established format of our magazines—*Amazing Science Fiction Stories* or *Fantastic*—by publishing special issues. In recent years this has been done on three occasions—each time in response to what we considered a clear-cut demand from our readership. The 30th Anniversary Issue of *Amazing* (April, 1956) was prepared in response to a long-continued and insistent request for a reprinting of well-remembered stories of earlier years. The Flying Saucer Issue of *Amazing* (October, 1957) was published at the crest of reader inquiry and discussion relative to that subject.

In both instances, sales of the magazine vindicated our interpretation of reader-interest.

The third temporary departure from established pattern is in your hands—this special Shaver Mystery issue of *Fantastic*. So far as this editor is concerned, the most phenomenal aspect of the Shaver Mystery is the tenacity with which it not only clings to life, but becomes more robust as time goes on; this to a point where—some ten years after the last Shaver-authored story saw print—inquiry and interest have shaped a clear question: *What is the Shaver Mystery all about?*

In all candor, it must be stated that this editor does not believe there is any foundation of truth whatever behind the Shaver Mystery. In fact, we feel that the word *mystery*, accepted as a definition of the phenomenon, is a misnomer in that there is certainly no mystery involved. We believe it to be solely the product of Richard S. Shaver's brilliant imagination. We sincerely admire Shaver for a remarkable creative ability, and we do not criticize Shaver, Palmer or any of the Mystery's adherents for their faith and belief. But authenticity is not created by devotion, however staunch and loyal.

(Continued on page 130)

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THE DREAM MAKERS

By RICHARD S. SHAVER

ILLUSTRATOR FINLAY

This is the only authoritative Shaver now in print; a kind of fiction that generated fanatical praise and bitter condemnation. Many call it fact; others refuse to define it one way or another, asserting only that it is highly dangerous (A. J Steichert, page 105, this issue). It is printed so that you may judge for yourself.

CHAPTER ONE

THE road slid like a hot gray river under the Ford's radiator cap. I was eighteen, the date was 1926, the Ford was a Model T. I was on my way to Philadelphia to join my older brother.

The drummer who had picked me up chattered volubly of his line of silk underwear, of chemises, dealers, his wife, the weather and the effect of ice cream on an empty stomach.

We stopped for a sandwich, coming into Coatesville. The drummer wisecracked steadily, and I looked at the girl behind the counter, then down at my

Good and evil—the hideous

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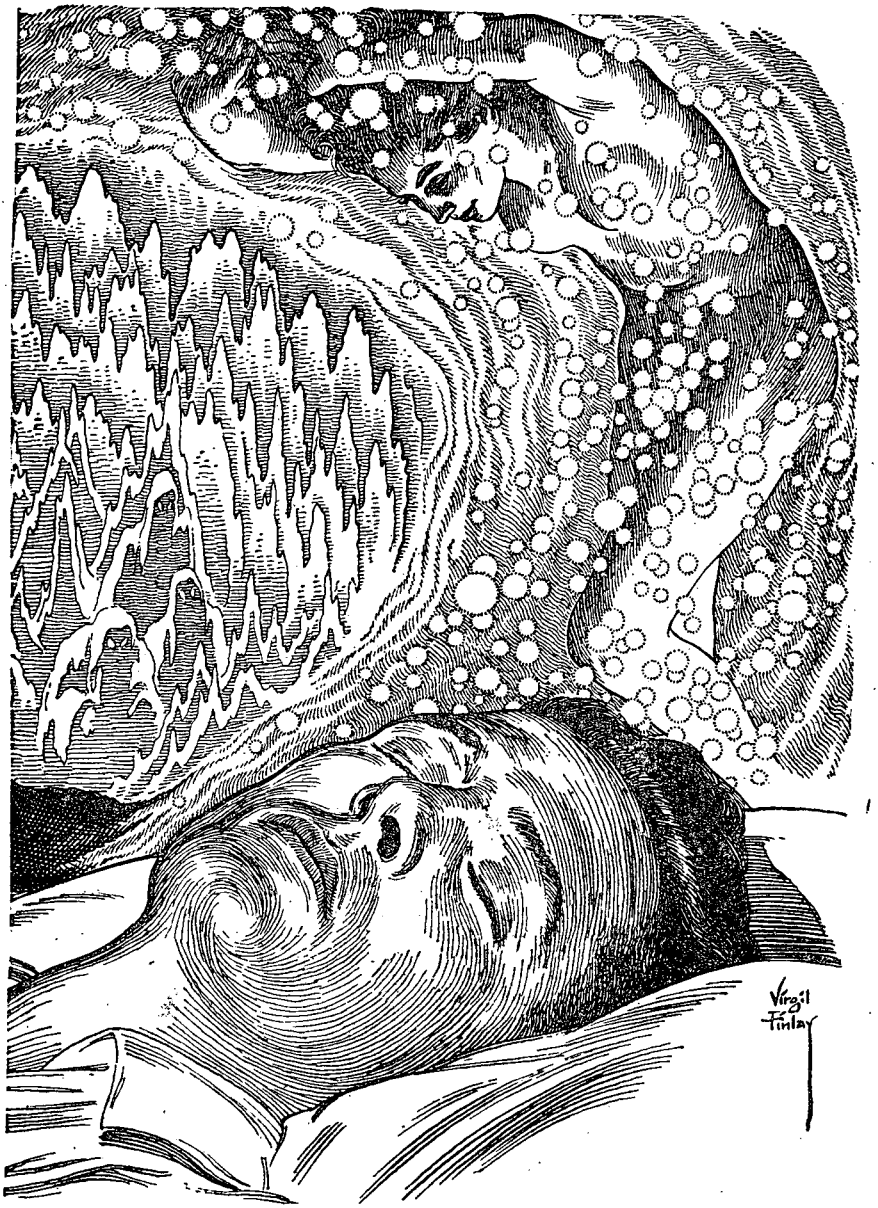

and the beautiful—battled for his sleeping mind.

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striped sweater and the flannel pants I was wearing. I wondered if I looked like a yokel to these near-city dwellers. The girl grinned swiftly at me and I decided not.

The world brightened, the chatter of the drummer glittered to me, the hot sun on the colored summer clothes and shiny cars was grand. The road—a steady *swush swush* of passing cars and trucks—was a great route of wealth and merchandise, pouring into the mecca toward which I was headed. The sandwich was good; and the girl had smiled at me instead of being made mysteriously to look the other way. Maybe I was going to lose my jinx. The world had somehow become a glittering place of promise since I had set out. People's faces wore a kind of holiday smile, colors became more vivid, everyone seemed more active and interested. The city was close, now. In my ear a tiny voice whispered, unheard by any but myself: "*I am with you, and the jinx is not.*"

I thought of people who heard voices in their mind. Insane, the experts said. But the voice I heard wasn't that kind of a voice. I knew that only too well. This voice—and the others—said things that proved themselves. Insanity can't do that. The same voice, coming over a telephone wire, making an appointment to demonstrate a vacuum cleaner (and then keeping the appointment), can't be called an illusion. That's what the voice I heard was like. And since it wasn't a telephone line, it must be something else. Something as real as a telephone wire. Radio, maybe. I kind of beamed radio ray. That's what I called it—a ray. It *was* something like that. It *proved* itself to be something like that.

We were moving again, a little corpuscle in the bloodstream of traffic flowing into the city. The sun was settling out of sight. The drummer chattered on and I listened vaguely. Around me I sensed the earth breathing deeper into sleep. Lights were flashing up in houses and people were getting supper. Now we were in the city, the houses were closer together, the streets narrowed.

We drove interminably beside the rows of road flares; they were repairing the tracks, and the torches stretched beside the trolley line before and behind, all flickering yellow, with black smoke hanging, raising in slow evil twists in the heavy, dusty air.

My eyes were full of dust, too, and sleepy from the wind; but in me was a hunger, a sensing of something wanted aroused by the smell and sight of the city. Or was that hunger aroused by the mysterious powers of my invisible little companion, testing all the sensuous thoughts of the great city with her far-reaching telepathic ray mechanism? Or was it a hunger made greater by a touch of the vital rays under her fingers? Rays that you *felt*,

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rather than heard. Other *kinds* of rays.

The strolling, thin-clad girls, the low laughs, an occasional snatch of music—and all the dark hot dusk full of a man smell and a woman smell. A hot asphalt smell; a smoky smell; a garbage smell; a sex smell; a dryness of the throat and a lusting for the sensuous life I felt all around was in me. Yet there was a repulsion about the whole vaguely sensed thing, a feeling something of fear and something of desire.

The dark houses, old and dim-lit, lived in so long they had a sentient life of their own, stared at me sorrowfully, saying: "poor men, poor men" over and over.

We drove slowly into an open Square where a dozen sick trees held a maze of footpaths apart, and all the tall old brick houses held out signs saying "Hotel." The drummer gestured toward one that held aloft a horseshoe of sickly yellow bulbs that squinted as they stated that this was the "Clarabelle Theatrical Hotel."

"Here's where I always stop," he said. "Do you know how to get where you are going?"

I took the written address from my pocket and after many and precise instructions started off on foot, the address being only some ten blocks away. I turned a corner into a darker street; the street lamps were all off or non-existent. There was a strange and furtive quietness about these streets. The gloom was thick and viscous, filled with a summer sensuality, as of a great night-blooming flower's heavy odor.

I passed the crowded markets, the penny arcades, the swinging doors of the saloons, the shooting galleries, the tattoo artists. I was aware of the pressure of pleasure-hungry crowds of young and old, lame and blind, cripples, beggars. The swaying hips of the short-skirted, sweatered girls were everywhere. In and out darted dirty urchins shrilling cries that held no childish glee but only pursuit or anger, begging or vending; and now and then a panhandler started his "gillette me have nickel" but I had only a little change myself and did not know whether my brother would have more when I arrived.

I was soon knocking at the left valve of an old double doorway with three stone steps, deep-bitten by the teeth of city-time. The black bricks gave off the odor of many damp days, many long wet nights.

The inner door opened and a white and ghoulish face peered at me mournfully, hardly curious, only just awakened from what seemed to have been the sleep of the dead. I was directed upward two flights of long abruptly twisting stairs and I entered the room at the end of the hall.

My blond brother, his hair curled with sweat, looked up from the stack of paper on which

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he wrote and grinned an astounded welcome. I grinned back.

There were two rooms, about eight by twelve each, at right angles to each other. The whole end of one was glass, on a bizarrely curved framework. There had once been a stair, but it was gone. The door was off and the opening covered with netting. Through this end one could see the heart of the city spread out, a glittering promise of wonder in the night. Here and there the tall upthrusts were lit by searchlights. Just a short distance away was City Hall—and the light made Billy Penn stand out in the darkness, holding his scroll in his hand.

The whole city roared and crawled, ascended and descended outside this window. The legs of the "L" stalked stiffly past, the presses thundered intermittently in the *Daily Mirror* building next door. In the yard an ailanthus thrust tropical fronds luxuriously against the netting—a tree, I knew already, was luxury here in the city. A delicious odor of frying doughnuts wafted in through the opening from a bakery across the street.

"Is that Billy Penn, and the City Hall?" I asked pointing—

"The guardian spirit of the city of brotherly love is almost in our backyard. Yes that's him. But don't put too much trust in his warding. How's mother? Have any trouble on the trip?"

So, the hot white highways, the luxurious color of the summer full of young life and gleaming vehicles and laughter, the beauty of the Water Gap, the country under the hot sun, home, the swimming hole, and the family, had all to be told about with picturing details. But I made no mention of my whispering friends, or of Max, my jinx, and my hope of shaking him.

As I talked excitedly—full of the stimulation of travel and many swift sights and sharp new impressions—the stairs clattered up under our shoes, the great high door swung sullenly behind us, the ancient pavements raced beneath our feet, and the shuffling crowds of Market Street eddied behind us as we turned in to eat.

To me this was a pleasant place. It was a cafeteria to ordinary eyes, but to my fresh country viewpoint, it was a stretch of glistening white table tops and clever people beautifully dressed conducting laughing conversations of great import; of green tiled floors like emerald, and floating realistic fishes of rainbow beauty on transparent walls of ultramarine; of gleaming silver rails and rows of luscious dishes artfully prepared to entice young hunger; of smiling white-gowned girls with curling ringlets under tricky caps; of mysterious nozzles that, properly persuaded, poured forth chocolate, cream, coffee, tea, lemonade or orange juice, magically as in a fairy tale.

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That night I slept, knowing *they* would come in my sleep to see who this was who *knew*, and what I was doing in their city. In my sleep they came, and that is always like a dream. But I was one who knew, and this is what happened . . .

CHAPTER TWO

THE map of the caverns below the city came to me by reflection when the ray found me. Like a modern city had it been built by gods instead of puny men. The reflection narrowed as *she* adjusted the focus to one great room in the rock. Nearby her a great weaving machine of the Elder construction, so infinitely complex, clicked its myriad little metal hands; the three-pronged turntable slowly took the cloth away; the many little loops pushed up miraculously to make the gleaming nap—and *her* face looked down into mine as she bent over the screen and shut out all the reflections.

That face, like Mother Hull's —long nose, grave mouth with huge under-lip, utter weary wisdom in her eyes, and that kind, faintly curious interest with which she was obeying my little friend's injunction to make sure I would be all right here in the city. For the hidden people always look out for their friends, and they have so many enemies making everything hard for them.

"You are the boy who knows us, and you have come to the city to get away from Max, the crazy horla?"

She knew my answer was "yes," for they always know all one's thought over the rays. Her voice—that was so much *woman* with the electric augmentation making her so greatly more than human—shook me as she said:

"Now, begin at the beginning and tell me about yourself. Tell everything, and swiftly, for you know I cannot waste time. And you must be worth our care or you will not get it."

My mind began its work, and she watched with that greater-than-human understanding, and the pain of the necessity that they always have of deciding whether they can afford to care for one or not; for there are so many, and so much trouble and death that they can only ward the death and the cutting rays off from a few. The others must take the stupefying ancient rays from the mad ones and be the ordinary unthinking people who are called "the masses" and who live their life out in horror, unknowing ever what it *might* have been.

And this is what the woman who ruled under my feet in Earth's ancient caves saw in my head as I told her how it had been, and why I was one who should and did receive their care. I was no longer myself, but the little boy that had gone to school, a very small boy . . .

Before me was the invitation of the sheet of blank paper,

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clean and virginal, seductive to me as a girl's skin to the amorous male.

On it I could put strange symbols that would tell other people of my imaginings, of my dreams and their curious forms that grew like giant fungi in the dark galleries of my mind.

With my will I clutched a pencil in my fist, and striving to put away the blankness of the desert that was life around me, my knuckles whitened and the pencil quivered before my eyes. Strangely it lengthened and became a tapping pointer in Miss Petty's hands. I was hunched over my desk staring at Miss Petty, a great figure in black, a lace collar around her fat neck reaching its incongruously dainty pattern over her great bulge of bosom.

The pointer tap-tapped against the blackboard. What was she tapping about? At the end of the pointer were great English capital letters. The whole alphabet stretched along the blackboard to the end of the room. Tap . . . tap . . . That tapping was ominous; she was looking at me. She was getting bigger; like the giantess in the fairy book. Those great bosoms of hers were above me all at once; her face was stiff like a board; the pointer menaced in her hand. What was the matter? Why didn't she say something? Suddenly she seized me and hauled me across my desk; now she was striking me with the pointer. I smelled dust from the dirt of my pants and from the floor.

My face was screwed up with the effort not to howl. Something was in my neck; I could hardly get my breath. I felt my ribs rub against the boards of the desk. That hurt like blazes. The pointer suddenly snapped, clattered to the floor. I rose in the air again and felt myself bounce horribly as I was thrown back in my seat. Everybody was staring at me like I had done something terrible. Miss Petty's face was an ugly red.

"Maybe you'll remember to sit straight in your seat after this." She put her teeth tight together. Her face was as stiff as before, but redder. The lace had curled up around her chin; she pulled it down and straightened it with her hand. She picked up the broken pointer and went back to the blackboard.

I looked straight ahead. The girls would be laughing at me; I could not look around. My face was wet and tight as if clamps were on it.

It was soon time to go home. I gathered up the books and got out of there in a hurry. After supper I went to bed right away, saying nothing to anyone. As I drifted off to sleep a little familiar voice began to talk to me.

"She only licked you because Max made her. Max is jealous of you, because I like you and make dreams for you. I don't like Max and he takes it out on you. But don't worry, I won't let it happen often. Miss Petty

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couldn't help it; Max made her do it."

The little voice went on while she sprinkled the soft ray sand of sleep on me as was their custom since time forgot when—with their friends. I knew about that from hearing the *big people* think around her. I listened with great comfort; and the soft sand got in my eyes more and more. But in the daytime I couldn't remember all the things I knew when I was asleep.

"Now, let's go up through the trapdoor, and float and float and see the funny people and play in all the strange machines."

The little girl who talked from so far away, yet was so close to me that I knew her better than my sister, turned a lever beside her; and the bed seemed to drift down and away. The two of us drifted up through the ceiling, which opened like two great trapdoors. The place above was strange and beautiful, like a ballroom filled with abandoned wonderful costumes and billiard cues and comic false faces and hobby horses and air guns and all the wonder of Christmas plus the wonder of being able to float where we wanted and see everything we wanted. The people we saw were all funny; different from real people in a wonderful way like circus clowns. Then the two of us got onto a great belt that rolled and rolled over great rubber wheels and gave us a ride for hours. We held each other in our arms and life was all joy. It was much much better than a roller-coaster.

The face of Mother Hull with her great underlip intruded upon my thought from the far past.

"You will have to go faster. You are telling an adult, you know."

I made answer. "How can you understand what it is I have to do unless I tell you what formed me? All these little things of that far time made me the mind that understands. And I think I have the answer that you need: that everyone looks for and cannot find. I must have help to work it out. Let me tell you how it was . . ."

"Go on, but faster." Her face was kind, but grim with that grimness of those who have had to let many die that the best might live. I had to show her I was of the best and that my life would make life a greater thing for all men—or she would let Max do what he willed with me—and even if I lived I would have no mind and would be like other people, content with a workbench and no ability to think at all. She *must* listen.

I skipped a long time and when I felt that again in that swift unrolling of my past was something she must see closely to understand, I opened my mind and again I was not myself, but a little boy.

The little boy looked down at the paper, top sheet on a tablet.

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It was covered with scribblings, hardly legible. My hand hurt; the pencil lay broken in my palm. I lay down the pencil pieces. That was Henry Traugh's neck in front of me, and I didn't like Henry Traugh's neck. Just beyond his fat ears were the two's multiplication tables on the blackboard. Miss Hinkle was pointing at them with a steel ruler. It was a two-foot ruler. It shone like a big knife in her hand. She looked like Babi Yaga. She wore a hat like a peach basket when she went out. She was too skinny. She talked through her nose.

I could see leaves through the window. The birds were doing stuff with sound outside. The light shone on the ruler. It made me think of the "crick." I wished I was fishing in the "crick."

I didn't like Henry Traugh's neck. I didn't like Miss Hinkle. I didn't like peach basket hats. I tore a strip of paper from the tablet. It was just as wide as Henry's neck was long. Henry's old man was school director. He was fat and wore black suits. His feet turned out. I spit on the paper. Plenty. It was properly sopping. Deftly I slapped the wet paper around Henry Traugh's neck.

Henry yowled. Henry put up his fat paws and pulled off the spit paper. Henry shook his wet hands like a cat. Miss Hinkle was coming down the aisle; her knees made sharp bumps in her skirt. I didn't like green and plaid skirts. The color made me sick. She was too tall, standing above Henry. Too thin. She was a bean pole.

"He spit all around my neck," Henry squealed. Henry was a natural born squealer. So was his old man.

"To spit on people is the worst thing you could do!" Miss Hinkle was looking down at me. That steel ruler was cold and still in her fingers. Her hands were funny white and red; her eyes were the same blue as the ruler and just as cold in her bony face.

I looked at her. There was never anything to say to teachers except the old answers in the books. What was the answer for that look in her eyes?

"Why did you do it?" Her voice was shrill. She was making herself mad by staring at me. I stared back and then looked down at my desk. My face was hot. My face burned. Everybody was looking at me. What else was there to think about but Miss Hinkle on earth? They looked at houses like that when they hung a bunch of flowers with black ribbons in the front. They were quiet and didn't yell or laugh till they got way past.

I couldn't swallow. My throat started to swell up and I knew my face was red. Nobody moved or turned a page or scribbled.

"Hold out your hand!"

Her voice shook; she was mad now. I stuck out my hand, cupped. She grabbed it, pulled and bent it to straighten it out. Desperately I struggled to keep my hands

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cupped for the blow. It didn't hurt then, so much.

Whack! Up went the ruler again.

"Babi Yaga," I thought, "you old witch."

Whack . . . whack . . . it went on and on.

I had my hand cupped now, it was wet and slippery and she couldn't hold it straight. She let go. My hand was red as a beet; the lines were little white trenches in it.

She grabbed the other hand. My throat was full of a lump. Was that Adam's Apple? I guessed it was.

The ruler gleamed like tears in my eyes. Whack . . . whack . . . whack . . . I was getting extra whacks because I couldn't yell loud with Adam's Apple in my neck.

I stared up at her. My face felt like mud was dried on it. I wished it was time to go swimming. Sliding down the mud banks. Her face was like a horse. Nobody would want the horse. My ma's face looked nice. My ma taught me to do things. She had taught me the alphabet and how to draw.

Two nights later was the night before Christmas. I stopped the unrolling panorama of my memory for the woman underground and showed her what happened the night before Christmas. I was sent to bed early, for they had to get ready for Santa Claus. I lay and watched the door knob and it did not move, so I knew Max wouldn't bother me for awhile. Max always made door knobs move when they shouldn't and nobody was there in the dark, no one in the shadows, but only the vague horrors that Max made with his mind over the telepathy rays.

A shadow glided now over the wall. It was a good shadow, not a horror. It was the secret girl saying *"Hello."* I fell asleep, quick, to meet her sooner.

I dreamed I got up and stole downstairs. It wasn't right, for the little girl wasn't around, she had gone to some kind of Christmas party where I couldn't go—for little girls only.

There were a strange lot of people down stairs in the dream. They looked familiar as if I knew them but hadn't seen them. They seemed to know me pretty well. They called me Dick.

Then I knew. They were the *secret people,* and I was seeing their reflections because the little girl had gone off and left the dream ray focused on my bed.

These were the older people who took care of the little girl who made dreams for me because she liked me best.

They were dancing and singing, and the place was all trimmed up for Santa Claus. One of them was dressed like Santa Claus, but I knew him. He was one of the old secret people. They were letting me in on the Christmas dream.

Dreams were one of their best ways of having fun. They seemed to be drunk, but not very.

Everybody was laughing. They

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weren't like other people. They didn't worry, reading minds and all. But I had always to pretend I didn't know what I knew for the people who didn't know the secret people.

Upstairs again my little friend whispered to me. She said: *"Max got you in trouble again at school. I'm going to fix him good sometime. But don't you mind, you have better friends than other people. You don't have to worry."*

I was myself again, and unrolling all the memory fast so she could see how everything was. Her wise face was understanding now, but still not seeing why she should bother with me more than with other people.

The steel plant, the tumult of the snorting metal monsters, the awful smells. Barney Freedman's saloon across from the gate in the high fence that enclosed the A C & F where Dad worked. Barney's gave off a smell of beer for several blocks. I waited there to give Dad his lunch bucket. Barney would have the bar set full of foaming beer mugs. The men came out, filed in, grabbing the beer. That was a sink of iniquity, they said, but all I ever saw go down the sink was beer. Gleaming tiles, polished brass spittoons, loud laughter, jolly talk. Columnar black legs and huge feet on the shining gold of the brass rail. I never saw a Weeping Nell waiting outside or Demon Rum pouncing on those giant, dirty men, though I often looked.

The unrolling past time came to an important place and I stopped it for her. The little boy was sleeping. I could see the foot of the high wooden bed even as I slept, for the dream ray was on. A little girl about my own size walked down the dream ray and climbed up on the high wooden footboard. Then she jumped down on my chest. She was clad in rags, and her face was black with dirt. She seemed crazy as heck. She was. Her hair was all one snarl, and had never been combed. She screamed and some weird power of the dream-making machine gave her weight on my chest, a horrifying quality that deluged me with deep fear, a terrible crushing smothering weight. She weighed as much as a horse. I was getting too weak to struggle when my little girl friend of the secret people came running and pushed the crazy little girl off my chest and back down the ray beam.

That was the first real nightmare. My secret friend told me that was one of the mad ones wandering around *"where we live."* She would watch after this and keep them off.

But all the time I kept quiet about the secret people who lived in the caves deep underground, because they told me no one would believe me and it would make trouble for me if I told about it.

My memory showed the woman the rolling mill. The sun-hot rails

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burning my bare feet, the stacks belching flame and smoke and the men with leather pieces on their legs and hob-nailed shoes. The long steel bars and pinchers and paddles, the continuous thunder as of subterranean forces, men with fire playing around their sweat-gleaming upper bodies and their red underwear. The golden showers of sparks from the molten metal at the ends of the tongs. And the secret people brooding over the work, too. I could hear them enjoying those strange and mighty pleasures they have and no one else has; no one who works.

It took me a long time to get by the rolling mill.

The boarders paying, and Dad sitting at the kitchen table and counting the money and taking out the rent.

The book counter at the company store. Me stealing a book from the tables and crawling under the long tables to read it where no one would see and grab it away. Reaching up and putting it back, grabbing another one.

And the meat counter, a mile long it looked, the thick green glass and the pleasant chill in the hot summer, the red meat making you hungry, and the strange faces of the many clerks. And the fascinating number of dogs that ducked through the swinging doors and hunted carefully the whole length of the sawdust floor, sniffing—all dogs bigger than me, it seemed. Jangling collars and rolling muscles and olfactory organs sniffing up the luscious scent, they swung past me oblivious of all but that ecstatic mixture of odors.

The dump cars rolling out into the hollow where the gravel pit had already cut away the beauty and dumping the black refuse from the steel—filling in the only pretty part of town.

The Hunky kids picking scrap on the black bank barefoot. They didn't go to school. Some of 'em had air guns they bought with the scrap iron money. They chased us away with the air guns.

Looking in awe at my brother's report card when he had been late every day for one month.

My old man got fired then for leading a strike. We moved to another town, because Dad had bought a restaurant. It was an immense hotel building. On the third floor was an abandoned ball room. One end opened on the flat roof. Below was Main Street. I found an air gun in the ball room. I sat on the roof and shot sparrows. I didn't know anybody in town. In my ear was a mocking whisper, even that first day. *"I am Max. I followed along. Underneath in the caves I followed with my ray. Try and have fun; you won't."*

After his whisper came the voice of my little friend: *"So did I follow, just to get even with Max and watch over you."*

I couldn't figure it out. How could they follow twelve miles like that? I didn't know then they could follow around the world if they wanted and never come to the surface.

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Next door was the movie house. There was an opening between the two big buildings. I got a long ladder, let it down in the opening. I went up the ladder, opened the long ventilator, and had free movie shows for a month. Then I let the ventilator open too far and they caught me. But stolen pictures are better than paid-for pictures.

I showed the woman with the big under-lip how I was growing up now. How the growing consciousness of woman and the need for woman was in me. My dreams were influenced by this. For the ever-present, all-seeing imp, Max, my personal hoodoo, would not let me talk to a real live girl. He made them think things bad about me. I never had a date or a best girl. It was one thing my secret girl friend would not help me with, for she herself did not desire me to have another girl.

It was now that I began to understand the secret people. They had pleasures so great that men would raise hell to get them if they knew. The little girl sometimes played some of their pleasure rays upon me and nothing on earth is worth so much. No thrill from living lips ever equalled a stim ray kiss from the secret people. And with Max to help, I got no others but hers, the little secret person, invisible except when she chose to show herself. And all the time they were there and I could hear them and many others down there, and no one knowing it but myself; nobody in the flesh around me on the surface. And still, they were more powerful than anyone else. The little girl had rays at her finger tips to do anything I desired, but I did not realize enough about the power of the mystery to desire much done for me by her. Nor did I understand much except the always-knowledge of their mental presence and their listening, and their help against such threats as Max and his deviltry.

When I went to sleep, the little friend would show me one of their pleasure palaces where the nude bodies of beautiful women were writhing under the terrific power of the pleasure rays, the dance of stimulated desire, which is a thousand times more powerful than natural desire ever is. And when my desires awoke with such sights she would "stim" me a little and kiss me a little. But she was not allowed to have powerful rays her older people played with, and she herself was not fully awake sexually yet. So it was a light business, her love for me, though we both took it seriously enough.

The restaurant fed students, troupers, farmers, drummers, after movie lunchers and the movie machine operators. My father became good at cooking, became the chef. He put giant Missouri bull frogs in the window. The help robbed him. I washed dishes, cracked oysters and kept growing up. Upstairs I had plenty of books, when I wasn't working. I killed the chickens, burned the rubbish, Jake, my

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brother, played football in high school. So did I, after a while. Grandma looked dignified and took Belle to the movies. Belle was four years younger than me. She ate everything, chased the cats into the dining room, let the big turtles out among the startled customers, got a tapeworm from eating raw hamburg. And the voice of the woman who looked like Mother Hull kept asking me: *What about it? What does all this life of yours mean?"* And I would answer: "I am coming to that, and then you will understand."

Max would cut in and say: *"He must be killed because he knows. Everybody that knows has to die."*

I would answer Max and say: "So would you die then. And everyone who knows you must be killed because they know you."

Max would answer: *"I keep the secret!"*

I would say: You are too dumb to keep any secret from anybody!" Which was very true; he was much dumber than anybody on the surface.

My life went on unrolling before her kindly critical eyes, both of us searching for that meaning in it that would make it worth her while to care for me by keeping Max off me. For we both knew that most ordinary people are stupid because such things as Max have made them so, and they are too unaware and too unthinking because of their raycut minds ever to figure out what has happened to them. My life went on that way, before us both, augmented into a flow of powerful thought by the ancient miracle mechanism of the telaugment-mech. My learning to live, mixed with the everlasting mental interference of a dogging invisible fiend who thought he hated me, and loved by an equally invisible but faithful girl who had protected me so long. There was a great deal of this life with little meaning in it that I could find to put before this woman to show her I was worth a great deal of her labor. For as I grew older, the fact of my knowing the antique secret made the labor of keeping me alive more difficult. The girl was asking for help here in this strange area of the caves under Philadelphia, but this woman had asked for a reason why she should have such help. I knew it would cost effort, so I was trying to show her my ambitions, and how they had grown. I delved deeper into the memories.

I became another person now: the inward man. Pale forms of unsubstantial being that had haunted my slow memory leaped outward now and took on life. My inward eyes turned here and there searching myself for value to offer this enigmatic woman who asked why I was worth her effort—but always found only the cloying shapes of far-off beauties much too thin to be quite real or to be a goal or a pleasure to anyone. In the underworld the beauties of the mind must be very

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well formed and meaningful. Then one has a value as a dream-maker—for the mind is to them an open book. Terribly they taunted me, those half-seen things that I knew would be ecstatic fire if only I could reach their forms with my faint understanding. But I could not. I was a clod of melting mud, no reaching or grasping in my hands, no real seeing in my inward eyes.

These things I was searching for under her compulsion were unborn thoughts, the children of emotions not quite felt; the things that showed what I might become in the future if I was allowed to develop—without too much harm.

If only I could give birth to a few of these thought-children before their misty forms melted into blackness; if only I could see their shape. But I knew that the watcher could evaluate what they might become in time, better than myself, and I had hope. I willed those slow sorrowings after unborn beauty to become being, and sometimes a misty tenuous shape would grow a little clearer in my mind.

In the rubbing dark these sliding sinuosities of mental effort coiled in sweating agony about my striving ego. Pale figures became white twisting flames that burnt my slow mind as it worked to wrap a thought with life-shape on the canvas that was my consciousness.

And mother Hull of the long underlip remarked casually that I ought to make a fine painter if nothing happened to me. I knew it was strange I had not known before that I wanted to paint, but now I knew. She told me I could be a painter if I willed and if nothing happened to me. I knew she meant if Max failed to get me with a ray that would make me as stupid as so many are who have been so hit.

The dream faded into the night and I slept.

When I awoke in the morning, I was not somebody else, but myself again, for that is the way of such strange mental contacts: the ego becomes confused and overpowered by greater flows of energy than those the body generates.

CHAPTER THREE

I ACQUIRED a student's part time job, nights from six to twelve, which left me my summer days for slow wanderings about the narrow twisting streets, through the museums, or loafing along a path under the old trees in Fairmount Park.

I was full of a hungry young sensuality, everything about was strange and exotic, the slums of the city exercised a morbid attraction upon me. The burlesque shows were temples of Venus, the heavy drays bouncing over the cobbles were Greek chariots, the young gypsy fortune tellers were pretty witches offering me a hot red life in exchange for my soul, the waterfront with its everlasting stench aroused my wanderlust. I would lean against the

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mooring pillar, scarred by the many snubbings of rough hawsers through the years, and dream away the afternoon as I watched the rusty water pour from the hold of some battered tramp from South America.

The long waterfront, I decided, was the best place to dream in, contacting me with the ends of the earth. My nemesis, the invisible Max, did not bother for a time, now.

In the back of my mind was a goal, still unformed, but my inner self pursued it continually. It was something to desire above all other things. I wasn't sure, yet, what it was, but it was inextricably mingled with my mental pictures of the secret people and their unearthly, incredible pleasures. My little friend among them would eventually lead me to their dwelling, would welcome me.

Before every street corner came to me I was sure that her flying heels had just preceded me, out of sight. The feeling was with me always; I would surprise her tomorrow. Meanwhile life lacked coherence, but it was beautiful.

Life was full of good sounds: The whistle from the copper valve above the peanut vendor's wagon, the bell of the ice cream man, the endless pad and scuffle and click and scrape of feet, the raucous declamation of the barkers, the nose-drawn cries of the hawkers pushing carts loaded with bright and mostly useless wares, the laughter of lazily strolling Negroes, a hurdy-gurdy with squawking parrots, the far-off whistle of a boat in the channel, the clang of the impatient streetcars trying to hasten a stubborn teamster whose tires found the tracks more acceptable than bouncing his buttocks over the cobbles, a hum and buzz of invisible machinery and that ancient throb of the sun going down that always marked the ending of the summer day for me. That was really the drums of the secret people brought to me over their rays; that was really their ceremony of the God that sank into the sea to sleep.

I lived always in two worlds. I was conscious of the vast and many-pillared green gloom of the temple of my mind. The bright glitter of life around me was a mere overlay to the strange growth that went on within me. The frail fringe of life, of fine thought fibers like the young roots of unplanted lives, or the dangling tentacles of airplants, and the pale faces that moved dimly in the far green gloom of the jungle that is the home of unthought thinkings, of unrealized beauties, of unwrought masterpieces, of untouched surfaces that are unsculped by that loving hand that is an artist. Those white faces tremulously quivered in an ecstasy of waiting in a reaching of their inner selves for light, for bright red life and love. I did not know these were the hidden people wishing they could break the old bonds of the secret and become one with the life of

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the outer world. I did not know what they were, but I learned.

When I looked on women who passed on the city streets, it was all these faces and twisting living roots of thought that trembled at their beauty and reached for their sinuous, hip-swaying, confident life.

So it was that the need of these women was ice and fire and protruding breasts and a strange hate that would crush them into submission to my mounting will.

And whether it was woman, really, that I wanted or some other thing to fill me I knew not, but only that their bodies roused the far reaches of my mind into an activity the extent of which I could only sense, and not know really. For women were still unknown, in many ways, to me. There had only been the revealing work of the hidden maid within my mind, showing me what women were, in love.

In the long summer twilights, I often sat upon the steps and breathed the cooling air that moved when the sun had ceased to heat the bricks and listened to the quieting city, watched the night shift going to the subway job, and savored the doughnut smell from the bakery across the way. The old three story brick edifices took on a less hideous appearance, their stiff blackened faces relaxed, a few people came out and sat down as though they had a minute to think, the paper trucks loaded up with the day's scandal next door and left a vast quiet behind their off-rushing.

I was thus engaged, listening with my inner ear to the far rushings of the blood of that animal, the city, when toward me came a young girl my own age. The loud jeers and gestures of nearby youths attracted my eyes, and I saw that she lurched like a ship in a storm. She was very good looking. As she neared me I smelled liquor, and perfume, which in no way offended me. I liked whisky, and as for perfume, I had few dislikes in the line of scents. It was the boys' jeers at her that roused the pity; pity and desire are much the same, sometimes, in some people.

Now all the young desire leaped from me toward the drunken beauty, that sick young animal staggering toward a nonexistent haven and I thought: I will call her, take her in, and see now, when she is herself again, are women what they say and what I think or some other thing.

But no words came out of me. I only marveled at the lure of her as she passed. She had not gone ten steps when a cab pulled alongside her in which were several men. Without much discussion she entered the dark interior and the cab wheeled off. My young mind pictured many imaginings around this occurrence, and a guilty feeling arose in me that I had somehow failed the young girl by not pulling her out of that dazed faring toward what I surmised would be no Sunday school picnic.

To stretch the soul out white

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and bare, and to look at it clearly, that is difficult. But mine stood, more or less naked, behind my thinkings. It had been desire that had called to the young girl, and not any real desire to help her. Now my soul pretended that it wanted the girl for some good plans for her rather than for her body alone. My conscience punished my soul, and disclaimed it.

The dark and cloudy magnetism of sex swirled higher in me. I was alone in a waking nightmare, a hunger gnawed at me with a great mouth full of thinking teeth that conjured always weird forms of beckoning women before me. How to satisfy this hunger I did not know. Does anyone, really?

I talked much with my brother, exchanging all this experience, the strange sights and peculiar longings that plagued me. He was an electrician in a huge hotel. It was named after the same old Quaker who stood frowning down upon the swarming of the insect, man, from the tip of the grandiose and time-blackened City Hall. From the rambling accounts of my brother's daily chores I absorbed a knowledge of the luxurious wanton life that went on in such great hotels.

Our life was one of many hungers and few repletions. We both desired women and talked about them, but we did not know how to dance and knew few people intimately. We met few women and those not the kind that arouse a man. We were lonely and cursed with these vaulting ambitions which will not take form in opportunity's realization. We were intelligent enough to see they were impossible of fulfillment.

The city became to my young love-hungry eyes a teeming hive of sensual objects, a beckoning siren of multiform allure, both a beauty and a horror that withheld her best enchantments behind a weird barrier.

The whispering, unseen Max was a part of that barrier, mocking my unsated longings and frustrated ambitions with sinister talkings: *"You will never win anything you desire, or do anything worth doing. I will see to that."*

My self withdrew slowly from me, and I became just another plodding member of that endless stream of beings who are going nowhere in a hurry but care not greatly if they reach there, for they know it is all nothing and futile.

After many jobs I finally secured a somewhat better paying job with a packing company selling and cutting meat. The bodies of calves and lambs and sheep hung in long rows before me, chilled flesh, grey and pink and white. The little buttocks of the lambs protruded, skewered here and there with a sales slip on a stick, the long grey veal touching the floor on one side and the white lambs and redder sheep on the other. Black steel hooks through their achilles tendons, all those little lives—I thought, hanging for me to hack apart. I

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forgot that these bodies had ever lived as I sawed and sliced energetically according to directions. Underfoot was yellow sawdust, around the cloudy chilled air of the cooler, and overhead the steel rails up and down which rolled the limbs of animals in neatly measured cuttings endlessly repeated.

I started at six and sawed and hacked till nine, when everyone ambled aimlessly out for "coffee." It was an ancient custom of the business that "efficiency" had not as yet eliminated. The bloody white-coated wielders of the blade congregated in various cafes around the beef houses for a half hour of gossip and such cheer as they could manage and then straggled back to take up cleaver and saw and butcher knife and boning blades and carve and hew till twelve again.

One of the bloody coated crew, I drank coffee and smoked cigarettes and listened to the chatter of the butchers, a recounting of prides, ways of cutting, queer points on the personalities of the customers, how much they lost at poker, a chaffering of the scurrying waitresses and a general hullabaloo of vast meaninglessness. But this sensing of the meaninglessness in the affairs of my fellow men had long ceased to be startling. I took it for granted, thinking: the color, the speech, the play and clash of character, are themselves meaning. With such thoughts, sitting very lonely, not understanding how to make talk about nothing, I was still the schoolboy who thought I must have something to say before I opened my mouth.

The waitress whose table I came to frequent was named Mary. One day as I paid for my coffee I looked at Mary's broad and pretty face, her plump soft arms, and leaned on the counter.

"Do you step out much, Mary?" I said. She started, whether in mock or real surprise. Her white teeth grinned at me. "Don't tell me you are asking me for a date? After all this time?" She laughed.

I didn't smile. I was tense. My throat was dry, and in me was a block of ice.

I looked at her white throat where a cheap heart-shaped locket swung. Her neck was a perfect round. Too round and white, really, for any neck to be. Her breasts swelled suddenly below the neck, and it seemed to me that all the world had at once become the two swelling breasts and the space between—just with the uttering of a few words. Mary stared at my hot desiring eyes.

"Well, if you mean it, here's my address. Wait in the candy store; I live over."

She scribbled, handed me the paper.

I grasped the dark wood of the cigar case with weak hands, my blood began to rush through me again—maybe after all the jinx would lift—I would defeat Max and learn to live. My legs slowly became my own again, I went out of the restaurant.

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I could hardly wait for quitting time.

That evening as I dressed I sang, a gibberish that came out any way.

My brother questioned me. "What makes you feel so good tonight?"

"Well, for one thing, I like the city. For another, I've got a date."

"With a waitress—who else would I meet? Her name's Mary. She's plump, but not too plump. That's all I know about her. But I don't intend to be a candidate for the priesthood if I can help it. She'll do."

My brother did not seem to listen—he had lain down—his eyes were closed. I sat down and read for half an hour, then wakened the sleeper.

"Want to eat, or go on sleeping?"

"Just a minute. I met Fleisher today."

"Not Al Fleisher?"

"Yes. From home, He's going to art school here. He seemed to want to see you."

"Well, we'll hear all about art, then."

"Al seemed to think all the girl students wear glasses and low heels. All the models are fat. Just why these young guys take up art is beyond me. Some suspect a genius in them—because they can draw. A subject in which one can succeed without brains. Making Leonardos out of bakers, Raphaels out of plumbers—at so much a head. It's an illusion—this art stuff."

"Sure it's ridiculous. Come on, let's eat."

Later I stood before the number Mary had given me. There was no answer to my ring. I went in the confectionery and waited till she came down.

She carried a large beaded bag. She was much more attractive than in the restaurant. Was she a bat, I wondered? Just a loose dame who didn't care to work at the trade—or was she on the level. I decided I didn't care a lot what she was—she aroused me more than any woman I knew. But I didn't know many. Only in strange dreams and vivid desires. Were these women? Were the invisible ray people, my little friend, or the long lipped wise woman—were they really women? All those things were not real, even though they were more vivid than life.

Mary laughed at me, her teeth fine and white.

"Almost didn't come."

She had had a drink of something, wine. Her fine skin was flushed her mouth looked hungry.

"Come upstairs and meet my friends. They had a date for me, but I made them break it."

She led me through a door and out, and up a dark flight of wooden steps, bare and resounding to the feet. The wallpaper was a sick green with great red flowers blooming in the murk. Her body was against me on the stair, perfumed flesh was in my nostrils, her hand was warm in mine. She laughed often, for no

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good reason, but I liked it; I did not hear enough laughing.

Her friend was a dark slim girl with large breasts and a too ripe smile. I liked her, but the friend's friend was a very fat boy who was drunk. I gathered we were set to go somewhere, anywhere and that a car was waiting to take us. I drank some wine, but could not join their wild chatter. I saw only the girls' breasts, their flashing eyes and gleaming teeth.

Heretofore I had had only my dreams, the presents of the little unseen friend, and they were rather wonderful fare in their way. Were these actual living creatures better than Hela in my dreams, better than the white curves of those whom I could never quite grasp and hold, who gave so fleetingly? Presently we were riding; Mary and I were in the back, the dark girl in the front, the fat boy driving. Was he too drunk, I wandered?

Mary's body was against me, her head went back, I kissed her. She held my head and ran her tongue over my lips like a little flame. It was a new thing to me. It was good. My arms tightened, my young lust held on so thin a chain so long, rose and howled like a wolf.

We picked up another couple. On the car floor were several bottles rolling about. We all drank from one of them. The fat boy clumsily jockeyed the car into a space at the curb. We piled out, laughing. The night air was good. We walked up a dark, brick paved area way. Mary pushed a button beside a door. It opened, a chain across the crack of light that shone out on us.

"It's me, Mike!" said Mary.

The chain clicked off, the door swung aside. We filed in. On one side a beer pump and pressure tanks glittered in their hard metallic reality. A phonograph howled in the next room. The air was layered with smoke, curling about the standing figures of several men. We sat about a table near the phonograph. Its mechanical intricacies displayed under glass were interesting. The circling records sliding on and off the disk as they riveted the air with staccato dance rhythms, the heavy smoke swirling, clutching at the shuffling dancers began to make me dizzy.

I shook my head and tried to listen to the conversation. A newcomer was retailing some argument about taxi fares. A cabby, I thought. I couldn't follow him. His voice was fuzzy.

I looked toward Mary. Her throat was a white pillar, the gold chain telling of its softness with its sinking. I reached out and touched the skin of her throat. Desire was ice in my neck, I could not swallow. She looked at me strangely. The phonograph howled: "Baby face, you've got the sweetest little baby face."

Why were they all so warm and full of laughing talk, while I could only stare at all the moving images and wonder if it were real and this was myself? They

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were immersed in the swimming, throbbing murk, they were a part of it, it was their habitat. But why was it so strange to me? Was I drunk? I looked at my hand. I got up, went to the phonograph. The room held still, the floor was solid, the cylinder of records circled as endlessly as ever. I dropped a nickle and sat down again, leaning toward Mary's perfumed nearness. She kissed me, and that was good, that was not so strange. The pale faces in my mind reached out hands toward her.

The gray roots of my far thinkings mingled weirdly with the swirling smoke that cut the air with many planes. It seemed to me that I had seen places in my dreams more like this place than itself was. How can reality get so unsubstantial and still hold up one's feet from the depths? I grasped the round of Mary's arm, and sank my fingers in it. That was real, it felt real, that was living flesh. I took my hand away, and the red prints glowed for a long time on its whiteness.

Somehow a tie had sprung up between us. No word had been said, but I knew that no matter who or what she was, this woman was mine. If her life was a real thing, I would stand upon it. If it too was unreal, well, to hell with such thinkings. Who can say what is real and what is not? What is the acid test? I got up and took Mary in my arms. I was no dancer, but I did not care.

We swayed about the room twice. Her body was warm, woman smell was in my brain. A madness reddened as though far fires shone through it. "My eyes are bloodshot," I thought. I looked in a mirror, but it was not so.

"I will have to teach you to dance," Mary said softly.

"I used to dance, I've forgotten how it's done."

We both knew that these words, any words, meant nothing. Between us was only one thought, and that kept shrieking now. The heart shaped locket swung back and forth. Mesmerically my eyes kept fixing themselves upon it, and the soft whiteness beneath.

She saw the direction of my fiery gaze. She leaned closely against me. Her voice whispered in my ear. "Let's go upstairs—they've got rooms . . ."

She took hold of my hand and led me toward the stairway, then stopped. Her eyes took on a look of fright, and she dropped my hand. She was looking over my shoulder. Before I could turn, a heavy hand grasped me by the arm and whirled me around. A fist collided with my jaw. I went down on one knee, and a fierce rage began to mount in me like an oiled fire, as I heard a big man say: "Keep away from my girl, see!"

I came up hard, butting the big man under the chin. The man staggered back. I went after him, throwing short blows at his belly. As the big man doubled over I took a round-house at his red

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face. His nose became a bloody mess. He looked like a hind-quarter of beef to me, in my rage. I aimed carefully, threw all my strength into a swing at his jaw. The big man fell like a dropped log, his head striking the brass-bound steps hard.

I looked down. The man lay with his mouth open, his head twisted on one side, about his head a large pool of red spreading, spreading. The gash from the step was a red mouth on the side of his head, the blood came steadily in little gleaming flows from the corners of the mouth.

In sudden terror I ran past the glittering bar, covered with wet spots and empty glasses. A big bruiser by the door put up a chain across the door. "No you don't! Wait'll the cops get here. That guy might be dead."

Dazed, I stood there, looking at the bruiser who barred my way. The room reeled around me. I turned to find Mary, but she was nowhere in sight. She must have gone up the stairs. Someone was bending over the bleeding man on the floor, listening to his breathing.

"I don't think he's breathing. This ain't no joke. He must have broke his neck when he fell on the step. He's so damned heavy his weight broke his neck."

I heard his voice only as something far off, for in my mind I was hearing another voice, a familiar, horrible voice. *"I got you that time! You've killed a man now, Dick! They'll fry you."*

"He's not dead!" I cried hysterically.

"Yes he is! I made sure of that. I threw him down hard on that step with a ray. Enough to break his neck ten times over. He's dead, all right!"

Now another voice, my little companion, full of remorse. *"Oh, Dick. I didn't mean to make the big man think Mary was his girl friend. I just wanted you to stop kissing her."*

"You've stopped me all right," I groaned. "Now what'll I do!"

"Don't worry, you'll be all right," she said.

Around me a strange pale light began to drift like fog, pulsating as though alive, seeming almost palpable as it mingled with the cigarette smoke in the room, coalescing about me so that I could even feel its weird fingers clutching at me. The room spun, and I began to reel. Things swirled around me, and dimly I heard a dismayed shout, a hoarse yell of incredulous terror, and then the room vanished. I seemed to be rising swiftly into the air, and sensed a vast depth of nothingness beneath me. It was as though I was at the top of a mount, with the wind whistling about my ears. Yet the strange milky fog clung tenuously about me, soft-seeming, but strong in its grasp, so that I could not escape it. Nor did I want to escape, for I was in deadly fear of falling.

Now I sank from that high place, and the swaying sensation I had been experiencing turned to a jerking. Noise beat about my

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ears, there was heat. Suddenly I saw a face, a long-lipped wise face; and I knew that the one to whom I had pleaded for protection had extended her power over me, to keep off Max. I knew that this was due to the things that I had not done, and the trouble I had gotten into because of it.

As on a screen before my eyes, many pictures came and went, supplanting *her* wise old face. I knew she was telling me something this way, telling me that she had decided to do as I had asked, decided to protect me.

I saw a strange place. Almost like the phantasmagoric background of a madman's dream. I saw swirling feathers, and their soft fluffiness was about me. I saw peacock tails with their round bright eyes with that blue that is sweet to the sight as some tastes are to the mouth. I saw smoke trailing beautiful veinings through the blackness, curling lips saying laughing little words and glistening wetly, women going up and down stairs, their skirts lifting tantalizingly over perfect knees, wheels turning somewhere; these and other pictures all mingled in unthinking non-meaning in my head. Then from the blackness that I was buried in a terrible rhythm caught me up, jarring me insanely. All the pictures swung up and back, up and back and I could not find a thought to take hold of, only this ripping shifting rhythm that was tearing me. Through this chaos of leaping, crazy thoughts and images of terror a slow beat came as of wings or of the sea waves and I was . . .

High on the rounded mount above the shore of a sea. I knew this was the dwelling place of certain beings. The stairs that led up were of hyacine, druggish-colored like sleep, and flecked with golden speckles and with smoky veinings. Round about were flowering azaleas, seven feet high, with salmon flowers as large as Mary's face when she had stood close, pressing against me. The walls were blue with many stars inset in the blueness, overlapping and differently shaded, like a crowded, too close sky. The pillars of the door were great naked arms, white as milk, with golden bands about the biceps, and the hands of those arms upheld sweetly carved bodies of girls and of deer. The door was round, and rolled open so that the sound of life and music and laughter from inside burst on me like the sun in the morning.

Inside were serving maidens, dancing in nude and blissful rapture, dancing always in rhythmic movements as though mesmerized and so commanded, and their movements mesmerized me too, into a swaying thirsting toward their beauty.

I asked about the paintings which were on the walls, but the gleaming ones glittered, laughing, saying that to tell the meaning would take an eon, as they were symbols describing the forming of the universe from a

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thought of integration and all the variations of the thought. I would have to appreciate them for their abstract qualities of form and line and color and let the meaning go till some other future time had come.

The dancing maidens stepped into a floating blueness and the sound of many musics told me that soon their time would be. I waited, and learned of these souls that chose this happy existence of dancing reverie in preference to life and its unlovingness. Even as I knew that the pains began. That was Max at his far-off battered mech, who had learned he was no longer under protection and had failed to make the grade. Even as the pains began I heard the soft whisper of the one little unseen who had always fought for me in that dark chaos where she lived among such as Max who are both mad and murderous. "*Watch the dream,*" she said.

The pains stopped, and I thought I heard Max shriek despairingly, and somehow I felt compassion for him. But the sound faded away, and with it came blackness.

It lasted but a moment, then light came slowly to my eyes, the blackened peeled ceiling, the white mantle of the gas light—the brown pattern of the wallpaper. How had I gotten home and into my own bed?

The sun was slanting in the far room upon my brother, bent over the table, his hair a yellow mane of tangled glistenings. White paper was strewn upon the table and over the bed. His hair had looked like that years ago when I had watched him throw his headgear off, bent over a football, waiting for the signal . . .

I wondered whether the dream was a true seeing of him or no. And the little voice whispered that it was, that he had worked all night while I was out drinking and facing arrest for murder. Sorrow went through me vaguely, as of a death far off.

I sat up and lit a cigarette, watching the sun try to gild the dull black wall and fail. I watched the smoke curls from his cigarette. Smoke was soft and womanish, I thought, curved with sudden turnings and quick laughing prettinesses like many dancing girls. My watch was saying two, but it had stopped. Maybe that was when I had hit the fat man? I did not feel proud that I had broken a man's neck. I was only ashamed that my brother would be upset, his thinking and concentration on his writing thrown out of gear. I was feeling like a skunk to face his eyes. I thought of the dream of the house of the strange souls upon the high place above the sea, the dancing nudes that were so much more than humans yet somehow less, having chosen everlasting ecstasy to turmoil and strife—they still swayed before my inner eyes. What fine things some dreams were, but still the warm sun outside was

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a brighter, finer thing now than the eyes of those living perfections of the dream. Life is warm, heating—and there is a strange something of death in a dream, some strange thing that draws and yet repels. Life is better than any dream, I decided. Yet I could remember the bright blue eyes in the feathers of the peacocks that were so like the eyes of the girl I had fought over last night.

Jake heard me stirring and came in, sat on the edge of the bed.

"What happened?"

"I was drunk, I talked to a girl in a joint, a fat man busted me one, I busted him back a few times, he fell down and broke his neck. Sordid enough for you? I should never have taken those boxing lessons; then I would be beaten up but legally sound. Or it might have been *my* neck that was broken instead of my freedom! They'll be coming for me."

My brother eyed me, pondering.

"I'll get a lawyer." Jake got up, went out. His back was not quite so straight, his step not quick and sure.

A conversation I had had with my brother ran through my mind. "I do not write for money, Dick. I want to make a mark upon the life tree, upon its trunk, to carve my criticism, my record, and to leave a blazed arrow for the next worm that crawls up that same trunk, to follow and to understand. I want to make my desires and ambitions into reality upon paper; they seem nearer to life themselves that way—to realization."

I had answered him. "The world is made of thought and you're a thinker. You take a world and do with it as you please when you write; that's why you like it—it responds to your efforts better than actual life in the world does. But it seems to me a poor thing to replace life itself. I desire life itself in all its vivid reality of taste, color, feel and sounding, rushing being. I desire the wind of happenings in my ears and the real world spinning under my feet. No false image upon paper, no vague imagining sweetly wrapped in scented words can replace my desire for life."

And my brother had answered: "Living is here between my ears, behind my eyes. Reality lies in thinking, and only in thinking—life is thought and thought-recording and the little ego cells looking over all the sudden surging impressions that are only *really* thought no matter what the source in actual or imagined things."

Hearing in my memory this past conversation, which my mind had been absently revolving ever since, I realized he had acquired a great truth. All this vast sprawling city around him which so aroused him, filled him with so many new desires and

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needs; all this rushing life, this amorphous many-celled animal called the city; all the things it held out for him to possess, to work for, to wish for, to envy; all these things lay in his mind for him. He sensed them and they were his in the only way anything could be his, by sensation. The one real thing for him was a sensation translated into thought between his ears. The more intense the sensation, the fuller, richer the life. But are thinking and sensation then the same thing? Does a copulating earthworm enjoy the fecundation as much as a human? One would never think if one received no sights, no sounds, no odors, feels or tastes. Yet, to his observation, an earthworm gets mightily interested in sensations—and perhaps, too, he lies in the earth and does a lot of thinking about such simple things . . .

"Five years," the judge said. And there was no way to argue with him. The fat man had been with friends; they testified against me angrily, and without a great deal of truth. The lawyer didn't help much. For the next five years I was going to find out all about thinking as a substitute for living!

Nydia came to me now in the dream. Nydia was the name I had given my little whispering friend who sometimes came in my dreams, sometimes as a voice in my ear, sometimes as a subtle, alien wisdom in my head. I had doubted her reality at first, but she had a way of burning me with a little needle of ray from the mech when I thought that way. She wanted me to understand. She had always wanted me, one way or another. And in a strange unnoticed way I loved my Nydia just a little more than anyone else I knew, because I was eternally grateful for her fighting to keep off Max.

"Now I am going to work some magic for you. Very strange magic, and when you wake you will remember what I said.—Reality is not what it seems, for the dream-makers can wrench reality about till one does not know what is real and what is not. Now, awake!"

Light came slowly to my eyes, the blackened, peeled ceiling, the white mantle of the gaslight, the brown pattern of the wallpaper. How had I gotten home and into my own bed?

Repetition! The dream all over again, but this time it was real.

Or was it?

The sun was slanting in the far room upon my brother's golden, glowing head bent over the white paper, many sheets strewn upon the table and over the bed.

Puzzled beyond thought, I lit a cigarette, watched the smoke curl upward. Smoke was soft and womanish, curved with sudden turnings—but what had really

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happened last night? Tediously I cast my memory back along the drunken trail.

Nothing had been quite as important as Mary's lips, her soft hair and the breasts under that thin blue velvet fabric. I never saw a girl look as good as that when I was sober. Had Mary really looked as good as that? I'd have to go and see Mary . . . but she had another man! I didn't want a woman who had another man. Why hadn't she told me she had another man?

A girl with bright blue eyes and a startling, clinging dress . . . and then a heavy hand on my shoulder, the shock of heavy fists striking me, and my own unreasoning swift rage striking back, the man falling, the twisted neck, the blood on the floor. Had these things happened?

I remembered the attempt to run away. After that I remembered nothing.

As I lay there on the bed, I became less and less sure of anything. Had I *really* dated Mary? Had we gotten drunk in that speakeasy? Had I actually killed a man?

But how could I have done *that?* Here I was safely in bed, it was the next day, the sun was shining, and although I remembered being trapped in the bar by a burly man who asked me to wait for the police, I was free now, and no police were evident. If it had all happened, wouldn't I be in jail, and not here in bed?

I got up out of bed, went out into the other room. My brother turned to look at me.

"What happened?"

"Maybe you can tell me?" I said, watching his face. In the dream I had said I'd killed a man. But now, awake, I didn't know. If I'd done anything unusual, Jake might know, might tell me. Give me a clue . . .

He laughed. "Were you *that* drunk?"

"Was I drunk?"

"A little. You came in and flopped on the bed, and began to snore the minute you hit the quilts. I undressed you and let you be."

"That all?"

My brother looked at me. "You looked a little mussed up—like you'd been in a fight."

I felt my jaw. It was sore.

"My jaw hurts. Seems somebody socked it."

"Hope you got in a few socks yourself."

"Seems I did. I remember some guy lying on the floor, out cold."

Here it was. What if I told him I'd killed a man? I decided he'd do just as he had in the dream, go out and get a lawyer. But what if I hadn't? My brain began whirling. I had to find out. I had to go out and find out. Find out if I was dreaming *now*. Or just what it was that was the dream, and what was the reality.

"I'm hungry," I said. "I'll go out and get something, and we'll have a snack here in the room."

"Good idea. I'll pound out a

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few more pages while you're gone."

I went to the restaurant, walking all the way, because I had to think. But all the thinking got nowhere, until I turned in at the restaurant and saw Mary at her usual station. I sat down and ordered coffee.

"Hi, kid," she greeted me. "Feeling better?"

"Maybe the coffee'll help," I said.

She set it before me, looked at me.

"Have a good time last night?" I asked her.

"Could have been better."

"How come?"

"It ended too soon. We might have made a real night of it if you hadn't gotten into that fight."

"Your boy friend?"

She looked surprised. "That big fat slob my boy friend? I never saw him before in my life!"

"But he said . . ."

"He didn't say anything, just came up to you and slugged you."

"Then what did I do?"

Her eyes lit up. "You plastered him good! Knocked him flat. You'd have won the fight easy, if you hadn't passed out from the drinks right then."

"Right then?"

"Sure! You hit him, then went to sleep on your feet, and keeled over. We had to stuff you in the car and take you home."

"What about the big guy?"

"He was disgusted. Got up and looked at you, then wandered off trying to pick a fight with somebody else."

I laughed out loud. This murder stuff *was* a dream. I wasn't going to spend five years in the pokey, thinking instead of living!

"What's so funny?" asked Mary. "You missed plenty, passing out that way."

I looked at the chain that held the locket that had fascinated me so the night before. The locket wasn't visible now, beneath her uniform, but I knew it was there, swinging between those swelling breasts. I stared at her. "Yeah, I guess I did. But I'll try to do better next time."

"I don't know if there'll be a next time," she said without hesitation.

There it was again. Always that jinx. If it wasn't Max, it was Nydia. Always I missed the boat. I looked down at my coffee and mumbled, "Sorry . . ."

She leaned over, patted my arm. "Don't look so downcast. I didn't say for sure. Give me a call in a few days. I've gotta go now. Somebody's taking my other table . . ."

She went off, and I watched the twinkle of her calfs as she went, the rhythm of her thighs beneath the tight-fitting uniform. Suddenly I grinned. Because in my mind there was a silent voice: *"Haven't you learned your lesson yet? If it's that sort of thing you want to see, I'll show you something tonight, in your dreams!"*

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"It's not like the real thing," I said.

"Oh, no! Maybe you think I'm not real?"

A sudden sharp pain made it impossible for me to remain seated. I got up like lightning, tipped over my empty cup. The clatter of it caused everybody in the restaurant to look my way. Mary looked too, and I flushed at the look on her face. It was obvious what she was thinking, that I was still under the influence of last night's drinking spree.

To my discomfiture, to add to that impression, I staggered as I walked to the door. In my mind, I heard tinkling laughter as Nydia rocked me with her rays, making me look like a drunk.

"She won't be likely to date you again, Dick, unless you walk straight. Walk straight, Dick!"

But I couldn't, and by the time I reached the door, my face was flaming.

But outside, as I walked back toward the rooms, I felt much better. At least I wasn't a murderer. And one thing that I remembered now was that a certain, long-lipped, wise old face had come to my rescue, and saved me from trouble. I knew that's why I had passed out, not from the drinks I had taken. That dream on the high mount had been from *her* mech, not from Nydia's.

I had a *big* protectress at last! I had passed the test. *She* had decided my life was worth preserving. Maybe from now on I'd live as men *should* live. And the memory of Max's despairing shriek came back to me. Maybe he, too, had learned his lesson! I sincerely hoped so.

I bought something to eat, and went back home. Jake and I ate, then he said he wanted me to meet a friend of his.

CHAPTER FOUR

JAKE dressed, and then we went through the bright, hot sun, past the whirling clouds of pigeons, under the dark arches of the Chinese wall and turning into the cafeteria met a young fellow. Jake said he was an art student.

We sat at a white smooth table, and a waitress plopped brimming glasses precisely in front of each of us and stood looking at the ceiling. She had eyeglasses above flat pale cheeks and stood as if her feet were tired. I looked at the art student, wishing vaguely that I had the money to go to school. My brother looked at him, too, quizzically:

"Well, Stan, what nonsense are you drawing now? From Venus in the plaster, or Lizzie in the flesh?

"Copying anatomical charts. Dreary business for a sensitive soul; but they say it is necessary to know a few muscles."

"They seem to repeat the same old thoughts about art: woman is beautiful, you must know her anatomy; flowers are

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beautiful—do they teach you botany, too?" I asked.

"Sometimes we do still life. That's recreation. The rest is everlasting anatomy—it drives me nuts. Draw this, do that—half the time I want to stay at home in the room. The company's better."

"Do you mean to paint as you please, like an artist, or do you mean to get a diploma and a job teaching kids or lettering ads?"

"I'd like to teach—give kids a better slant on life by teaching them to observe. I've got to have a diploma. But my talent is not being developed properly."

"Art for the sake of bread and butter. Ridiculous." I grinned. "You want the diploma. Kid 'em along, be punctual—talk pretty and draw as you please. Your thoughts are your own. Someone criticized you—and you listened. Don't listen."

"A fine artist could give a man a lot. But they don't have that kind of man, unfortunately. Do you draw?" asked Stan.

"No. I'm only talking. I'm nineteen and I work in a beef house, cutting meat."

We talked a long time about art, then Stan rose to go. His check was only fifteen cents.

"Is that all you're going to eat?" I asked.

"Probably starving like a true artist. Drawing pictures sublimates his yearnings." My brother spoke loudly, meaning Stan to hear.

Stan, getting his hat, turned back to the table. "If only they did sublimate them. They make it worse. It's a lousy world in a lot of ways. I see flesh continually, think about form, sensual colors, and the beauty of the human figure. But my personal experience is too limited, by far, to suit what seems to be my needs. Well, something will turn up, my father used to say. In the meantime, though, it's a lousy world." He hurried off, looking at the clock.

My brother looked at me. "I've been checking ads for apartments. There are plenty of vacancies right now. We've got to send for the folks sometime; it might be well now. Let's go and rent a place and write Ma tonight. Dad's job on the railroad's about over. Ma said he wrote he couldn't stick it much longer; he almost got killed. We'll write to both of 'em tonight. You write Ma, and I'll write the skipper."

The apartment was five rooms over a bakery store. There was no garden, but the fire escape looked down on a lot of other people's little gardens, a little enclosed world of fenced plots, surrounded by the three-story apartments and the black spider-webs of iron fire escapes ambling down in varied indirection. Through the center ran a narrow four-foot alley, lined with the garbage cans and ash bins.

Moving was a peculiar job; the two dinky rooms with the open end, which seemed so sordidly dirty, so ancient and full

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of the sick smell of the life that had been there before us, were yet painfully hard to leave. We hated to go away from the hot beating heart of the city that had been pounding in our ears so steadily it had become a part of us. We carried all our collected clothes, bags, books and many piled magazines down onto the three white worn steps and hailed a taxi.

The driver wheeled in the narrow street and squealed to a stop. We started tossing bags and stacks of books into the back. He jumped out and helped.

"Where to—the library?" The cabby grinned, lighting a cigarette.

"52nd and Walnut," Jake answered, grinning in return. "We've been to the library."

We clambered in on top of the piled belongings. The cab bumped along under the "L," the little old houses, the new big buildings crowding them with their high glass fronts. We crossed the bridges; the river gleamed a long black flatness; the slaughterhouses went by—their smell was strong today. What a stink!

The cab swung over into Walnut. There were a few catalpas shedding their long pods, some sycamores. The cabby pulled up in front of the bakery.

We were home.

When Ma came she took twenty dollars, went to a store and paid it on a hundred dollars worth of furniture, which with the things she had shipped, furnished the place.

Ma cooked supper over the little gas range. It was strange to eat at home and not count the prices of the dishes. Ma was a swell cook. Belle, my sister, was sitting there laughing at Jake. She was a brownette, with a bright young, peach-bloom face. Belle was getting beautiful. She was a good kid. But too thin. She was strong and alive, though. She had a nervous strength, a grip in her that surprised with its intensity. She had a disconcertingly honest pair of deep blue eyes that were always subtly changing color. Home was a good thing. Pretty soon Dad would come.

Fall departed, Christmas was almost here. Every day I rode the "L" to Ninth and Noble, hacked and sawed, sliced and cut, hung the meat up and took it down, wrote down the orders and skewered the lambs, over and over. Every Saturday I stamped and counted, tagged and straightened, went for coffee and came back, and stood around till noon. Sometimes I got drunk, sometimes I saw Mary, but not often. Time went by; I stood still on a treadmill, watching it.

The day before Christmas, everybody who came in the cooler had a bottle. I had many friends, and they all insisted on a nip from their bottle, some wine, some whiskey. By three o'clock someone had put rockers

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under the room, I would have sworn. I had ordered two ducks from the poultry department. They were big ducks, probably Moscovy. I had a leg of lamb I had picked out of the bag of lambs. I wrapped them up together. They were too big. I unwrapped them and wrapped them up again separately, laboriously fumbling with the paper and string. The job was very hard with my hands not behaving right.

Finally, ducks under both arms, I went up the steps of the "L." I had never noticed how far apart the steps were before, those black steel grids, or how slippery. The day was brisk. I stood on the platform watching the clouds in a clean blue sky. It was clouding up over there. Maybe it would snow. I didn't think so. Too windy. I got on the train, the doors banging behind me. It was crowded. I stood with feet wide apart; I couldn't use a strap. It was hot. Everybody had bundles. Sleep was pounding me on the head. I braced my knees against the bench. The duck slipped from under my elbow. People were laughing. I shouldn't have bent over to pick it up. I'd better get off. 32nd Street, the doors flew open, I staggered off, dropped the ducks, leaned over the rail. The world was a pinwheel. I was the pin. Pins were important to pinwheels. The pin was vomiting. The wheel slowed, to help me out, maybe. The air was cooler. I picked up the ducks. Where the hell was the leg of lamb? I've lost the lamb. The best in the packing house. Another train roared up. I'd better wait. I leaned against the rail. The two car tracks ran away through the housetops. They were supposed to meet on the horizon. Where was the horizon? I squinted. Too many horizons. My eyes were out of focus. I walked up and down. Pretty straight, straight enough. I got on the next train. 52nd. I got off, reeling again from the warm close air. Through the stile, clicking down the spaced grids. Follow the cracks in the pavement. This pavement didn't have any cracks. What the hell did a guy drink for anyway? I'd better go in the back way.

The narrow alley was empty. The fire escape was steep. It was icy too, an inch thick. I started up, gripping the iron. A duck slipped, fell bouncing, down, down. I backed down slowly, picked up the duck. I started up again. "Ouch." I was down on one knee. The iron was cold. That shin was barked plenty. No sense to this. I could see I'd have to crawl up, a step at a time. I stood up. The platform at the top was leaning over like a ship in a storm. I leaned against the door. The next door building leaned over gradually, peering down on me. Then it straightened up and leaned away from me in disgust. The door was locked. Damn it, what'd they lock doors for? I never locked

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doors; I didn't have anything to steal. I kicked the door. Ma came, turned the key. Her face went white. Gees Ma is getting old. I dropped the ducks on the table and put my hand against the wall to steady myself.

"You're just like your grandpa" said my mother, her breath hissing in anger. "Get in your room and stay there; we've company. Anne's home. She's brought a friend."

"I wanta see her," I answered, looking at her eyes that blazed intensely. What'd she have to get so mad for, anyway? I couldn't help it.

"I ain't seen Anne for over a year. I wanta see her." I went in the bathroom, bent over to wash. There it comes again. What do people drink for anyway? Damn if I knew. I washed the bowl out, ducked my head in the full bowl. I straightened up, my shirt got wet. I took it off. The room was going round. I fell against the wall. I opened the door. Ma was standing there. She grabbed me. What did she get mad for? She pushed me through the next door into my room. The lock clicked. She locked the door on me. I oughta be mad. I fell on the bed; blackness closed over me . . .

The blackness was full of flashing shapes and colors, the pyrotechnics of flashing memories or perceptions of the unseen. The room swung slowly under me, the ceiling receded. I closed my eyes again, but the swinging kept on. I knew it was my little girl friend of the unseen, swinging me to sleep and sad for me; that she was ashamed of me. I was not asleep, but the swinging kept on. I could not move. Great fiery blossoms opened in my head, spreading their petals, forms came and went furiously. I opened my eyes, the ceiling went away sickeningly. Anne was home for Christmas. Home from college. She took care of somebody's kids. How she managed. She was a smart girl, to pay her way. She was married now. Just a little while ago we were going to the woods together, to climb down the bluff and see the falls, below the big spring. I helped her shin down some trees from the high rocks. It was a long climb down the rocks, an hour's work and fun and thrill of danger. We put our feet in the cold spray of the falls in the rock clefts where it leaped from above, and there were little ferns growing in the spray that was always about.

I sank deeper into the blackness, my blood throbbed in my ears, steady and fast, far off, like a drum on a hill. A voice chanting softly, a familiar voice that meant I was asleep. The sound of the voice became gradually clearer and clearer. The chanting voice led me into a dream . . .

Under the kneed cypress trees the lilies swayed softly, red and greedy were their faces, and their leaves were black. Their pistils protruded like the tongues

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of little snakes, darting quickly from side to side. The poisonous anthers and their stems writhed whitely as though in pain of waiting, waiting to sting and to let go their venomous seed into the blood. The heavy orchids leaned their damned faces to be seen, their sad dangling roots white like the hair of aged women. Maladeruem blooms thrust upward their purple and gold, with light pale stalks of green mottled with swamp-death. The sick dark water rippled silently, heavily. Under the slow ringing outward ripples moved the undead mouths of reptilian hungers, the undoers of self.

Pushing through this miasma of bitter blooms, where the acids of despair distilled on the great leaves from the very air, groping through the deadly mist, her polished white flanks spattered with the fecund green mud, her red hair hanging like wild flames over her small hard breasts, came she whom the men of the Elf-mounds call Hekla.

About her the vast, swaying silence of the sick swamp, the slow rustle of the curving, reaching leaves, the stretching of the hungry tendrils, the heavy smothering smell of the forbidden swamp, the soft touching of the turgid leaves, all seemed to her too loud, weighted with fear.

Conaire was king of Aire, and Conaire had decreed her death. For Conaire had become a Christian, and now all the old loves were forbidden, and the old Druid lore was now witchcraft, and all the other ancient practices and worships were abandoned, and a price was on her head.

No more would she preside at the festival of the Dark one, for he was now called the Devil, and they were burning all who served him, for they were blamed with all the evils that were now in the land. And that was a great deal.

Like a sleep-walker, the white pale form of the witch-woman dragged through the dank mists of the darkening swamp. Before her loomed the vague, transparent figure of the Dark God. The strange life before her bore her up with his own life force.

After a time they came to a great rock opening between the hills at the rim of the swamp land. They entered the gloomy way, and down and down. A great metal door opened into a mighty ancient building under the Earth.

Hekla's white body went into that dread place, the home of her God. For she was welcome now in that feared, strange, well-nigh forgotten underworld that is spoken of by learned men only. Metal magic whirred and clanked and strange living light welcomed her. The light sang a message in her brain, and she who was welcome now nowhere else had found her home.

The singing light of life that made a message for Hekla, the servant of the Dark God, was the same chanting voice that was making me dream. But was it a dream?

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"The soft hot scent of life flows from my light, the upspringing rhythms of life sway their forms forever before me and those who serve, the plains and hills nourish their roots. This man is more than any sick souled poet, more than any sound of passing tinkling, mystic music of design, more than the beautiful lure of death's black silence —he seeks. He seeks the things the mother makes to live, and kills the things the mother wishes not to have her life. He seeks the leaping surge of life's wellsprings to bathe his being. The love of life in him sings a song that mounts in blood red beats to the heart of the Dark Mother of life—Mu herself. He quests for beauty hungrily and clasps it, giving life in return. He smiles upon his mother and serves her, and the mother gives him life in return. He does these things hungrily, for it IS food.

"The flowers of death are melancholy mysteries to him, the poisons they pulse with are not a drug for him, for he is love."

The chanting voice fell slowly to a rest, and there arose a steady shuffle as of many people, and murmurings and low cries, someone weeping and a great scream from high up of one in a nightmare of torture. From that single scream were bred swiftly many screams, and their number grew and grew, and the whole sweep of Time and the whole surface of Earth became filled and covered over with the screams and the torn bloody white bodies of Pain's children.

Now this went away and I was among many people of the time of Hekla in an ancient town. It was the market place, but no one traded today. We stood about a pier of wood, staring at the figure that twisted its white lovely face in agony to the Dead God above the sky and then back to that deep, sick Hell below the earth.

Twisting smoke clouds and the glare of mounting flames licked at the white soft skin that turned black and ran with bursting veins of scorching blood.

The stake was high, and the people circled slowly peering this way and leaning with the flames to right and left to see through to the picture of evil that was a sweet woman's form that leaped and leaped again against the chains that were forged by that ignorant time. Her mouth was open and her teeth champed whitely on her tongue that streamed with blood down her fair round chin.

Time flowed before my eyes like a great serpent as wide as a sea, and made of glass, and in that serpent people and places and swift events. Among them all that stake was a living thing and had many children, and all of them were evil—Time swept on and became many black shirts posturing upon the backs of men without minds, and all of them crying "Fuehrer." Strangely Time turned back again and I saw that market place where the

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black greasy smoke rolled low, and took shapes that beat against the brain with fearful meaning. Fluttering birds streamed by and wheeled, and flew back whence they came, sensing the black coils of fear that lay upon all things that were in that place. The dogs sat on their haunches, and their red tongues lolled out dripping slow saliva on the pavings at the smell of roasting meat. Monks strolled by muttering, and flashed their eyes in triumph at the searing figure on the stake, for was she not the enemy that is "Evil"? And had they not triumphed over her at the great trial where she had been tortured into admitting that the Dark God and the devil were both her master and that they were the same? She was a pagan and that was enough. God would never accept her, that was sure, so why should she be on earth? Their beads clicked in their hands, and they did not know themselves were Evil, or did not care.

The sound of those strange, mad monks' feet, the many shuffling, sick and stupid feet that were not the feet of man, but of deluded things, died out, and I was alone. The serpent that was glass and things and Time became empty and I was beyond that empty wide place between life and here and now and there. Ahead lay certain hills, but around me were only empty lookings and vain wantings, half-desires and vague unliving thoughts. Ahead lay certain strange hills and well formed mountains, tier on tier, and on beyond them was the "Edge."

Beyond the Edge there dwelt a breathing, attracting mystery, a living writhing mist that lifted and fell and revealed among its folds and coils that had not Time but was its child—those plants, those blooming truths that have not yet become a *fact-of-life.* Those brilliant life-red petals that are new truths, these waited —beyond the Edge. There was a will within me, but what it willed for me to do I could not feel. My hands were reaching, I was an ache, a vast ache to create something, to shape some object, to enwrap some thought in the clothing of matter or metal. But the thing was vague and lost, in the depths of me. The dream faded into the gray throbbing mist and I saw again Hekla where she walked in that weird underworld that has been called Hell because in some places devils have there an abode; and has been called by others Fairyland because in other places something like the White Magic exists.

The walls where she walked now were painted walls; the air of this underworld was softly warm; strange fungoids bloomed and fruited where she passed, in hungry masses, waving odd rhythms with reaching stems. The walls were many, high and vaulting, hung with bats, or were they bats? White womanish succubae, and slow twisting shapes vaguely clutching out for life meandered in tortuous windings like mist endowed with mind.

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The paintings of the walls were strangely living, like life arrangements in a single plane of being—moving, creating, meeting, rearranging, growing—chameleonic colors glowing and fading upon the pale forms that fled and pursued. The formless forms that paused, solidified, and glowed with radiant beauty, only to melt and fade and flee across the walls. The hanging circling bats that were not bats, not men, but somehow only hungry souls that hungered for a life more suitable, that pursue endless wantings, luring phantoms in a futile forever of slow winging undeath of watching and waiting, bats who with their slow wingbeats cool a Daemon's brow where he hangs at un-work, stoops at less, cavils at more, or caresses a torment. A madness that is Daemonic toiling with others' visions to glue them to the wall and make them less forever.

Hekla strolled beneath the weighty, high-up ceilings; beneath the moving, warm, soft air; beneath the groping arms of ancient fungi, in that luminous red gloom—

There came a knock at my door, and the dream faded away.

My mother entered the room and wet my face with a cloth and the coolness was soothing. I looked up and saw that she was not angry anymore, but only sorrowful. She spoke:

"Don't mind my flying off the handle. But you looked just like your grandpa did when he used to come in drunk. We had so much pain and trouble with his wasting. So many good livings he squandered away.

"Anne's brought a friend with her. Clean up; it's almost time to eat."

I got up, changed into clean pants went into the bath and threw cold water on my naked chest, made faces in the mirror, examined my last filling to see if it was loose, drew on a clean shirt and combed my hair. I went into the parlor, which was like a sun room, with wide windows and reed furniture. My sister embraced me and kissed me on the lips. She was different, very mature; her hair was bobbed short and thick black curls tight to her head made her nearly beautiful. Her friend was tall, somewhat boyish, but with a large bosom and a carefree laugh. She had a warm grasp. I sat down and picked up a book I had been reading to show her, Ourobours. She was interested. I liked her.

A merry Christmas the next day was. Anne was full of good spirits, glad to be home. We reminisced about the restaurants, and how she chased a club sandwich down the room on a plate only to have it finally topple off as she reached the customer. About the woods and the walks we took; about the schools she used to teach in the hills; and how the old Ford used to rare up and down and how it always got there anyway, the crazy patch work of the fields sliding

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underneath the fenders steadily; and about how many details it took to make a character or a scene live in a writing and if only it could be done without all that work for the writer and the reader.

The day flew by in a maze of talk and homely good cheer. I felt almost happy. But the formless growing emptiness in me, peering out, my hands wanted something to shape, to make, to paint I knew not what. This moment which seemed so clear and solid, such evident reality, to the others was to me a mock-shadow over a subterranean, yawning wonder-chasm which I must understand or burst. The words I heard, even as I laughed, kept turning over in my brain, repeating themselves in varying forms, upside down, everyway, slipping from sound into print in my mind and back again, and underneath the fresh warm bodies of those about me I was aware of the mechanisms of life. I could see the nerves passing orders back and forth, the magnetic fields around the living forms, the skeletons moving under the musculature, and the air, invisible to the others, was an embracing medium, full of fair, strange forms, the smoke from the cigarettes winding sensuously around them. I was too much aware of things today. It gave me an uneasy feeling, as though I were a skeleton myself sitting at a feast disguised as a man. I could even see the sound waves shatter the smoky forms as they crashed through the air.

Imagination, I thought to myself, was a terribly perceptive thing. All my knowledge of life and its strange activities, its flux of powerful forces disguised as forms, as odors, as beings, as happenings, flashed forever in a rapid introspective thinking around and about the ordinary, everyday scene. Every article as my eyes fell upon it was swiftly put through a mental inventory, stating its origin, color, shape, taste, desirability. My mind was a dynamo, operating on several planes of thought at once, even as I spoke and laughed. This mental recording, observation and synthesizing, this imaginative building went on and on. I seemed to sit back and watch, my inner self, astounded, soaking up everything.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTMAS day dissolved into the past quickly like other days, but the memory of that queer perception of the transparency of reality stayed with me. Always my mind was grasping the sights around me and testing their solidity with the acid that day's sudden insight had given me. My sister's bright excited face went away, and the face of her friend too. The days became again gray and empty of anything but red meat, flashing knives and dull wanderings in the dusk, looking for something to fill my hunger.

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The job was tiresome. A year now I had worked and saw nothing in it for me but an increasing dullness. Feeling like a ghoul at work for a race of half-alive carnivores, I handled the dead bodies of the lambs and the calves with a guilty feeling as though there were something wrong about all the death and myself somehow responsible.

Mary was gone, the women I found were not the same, the fun had gone out of life, the first fierce fire of the discovery of the nature of the city had died to a dull disappointment in the whole fabric. I had no friends. In sheer desperation I gave a week's notice.

For some weeks I lay about the house, reading, drawing a little to amuse myself, not thinking, writing a few verses. The city had palled on me, I could not think of going into its swarming mass after another job. My brother looked questioningly at me, but said nothing—understanding was between us; a year was a long time at an unpleasant job. Dad was working now. He was a chef at a convent not far away. We had enough to get by on. I would do something that agreed with me, find a job that suited me if there were any such.

I answered several ads by letter, and one day found myself sauntering into the boxwood-lined drive of a landscape company's office. It was spring, the grass was greening, the great trees overhead were bursting the sheaths from their leaf buds, some robins were in evidence, life smelled good again.

Tall and thin cedars stood in groups, and at their bases round box bushes contrasted their shapes, while yews and junipers, rhododendrons, laurel, arbor-vitae, and hemlock were balled in burlap and rope to load on waiting trucks. It was noon and several workers sat eating their lunches among the fragrant evergreens, their bare arms tanned and ropy with muscle, their faces ruddy and white teeth flashing in laughing talk. This was different from handling the clammy meat, I thought. These things were alive and good to look at. This was the sun, the opened earth, and living things. No cold box full of corpses, but the earth and its beauty.

I entered the little office behind the towering cedars and wide-spreading dogwood, feeling in my pocket for the letter I had got in answer to my own. No one was in, the place was littered, two phones suspended on lazy tongs hung by the worn swivel chair, an open file was ruffled and overflowing.

After a few moments a little dried-up fellow with a loud, harsh and yet intensely human voice came in, looked me over and asked:

"Ever do any hard work?"

"Quite a lot."

"This job is hard outdoor work, and you look like the kind we want if you can stand it. There is a good opportunity for

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you if you try. Seven o'clock in the morning, paid every week on Saturday, two days held back. You'll like it, I think."

In the morning I was on hand in the clothes I had used to wear to peddle ice—corduroys and a blue woolen shirt. I found myself climbing into the back end of a battered Ford truck, already loaded with an assortment of strange equipment. Ropes, block and falls, crowbars, sledges, a bale of burlap, anchor bars of steel four inches through and six feet long, shovels, picks and mattocks; all these were underfoot and stacked around me while the other men who were shouting to other trucks and talking in a whirl of sound were of every kind. There were five on the back of the truck and two in the front: a Mexican, two fat Italians, a Swede, a Southerner and two Pennsylvanians like myself, from their talk. The truck careened off out of the "yard," just ahead of a dozen others, all similarly draped with ropes, men and tools, all snorting, backfiring and the men shouting—the idea seemed to be to make as much noise as possible. It sounded like a circus unloading, or—as I learned later—like nothing on earth but a yard full of "big-tree-movers" going to work.

I lay on the burlap and letting my head roll with the sway of the old truck, watched the sky, blue as a robin's egg, flecked with brilliant whites here and there. It dazzled. It was long since I had looked at the sky. Now some ancient trees reached toward each other above us, and their leaves were new, glossy, clean as truth. Intricately they cut the blue with their swaying knife-thin edges; intricately they cut and left a lacework unbelievable. I had never noticed before how designed and harmonious were the spaces between the leaves of plants; it was a revelation. This was no accidental beauty, this was life designing itself into beauty. This was design above me, not just branches and leaves. There was a profound eternal truth in the sudden revelation; it beat upon me that all life designed itself, was pattern. I had heard the words before, vaguely, but now the mighty truth was exposed to me, my mind opened to it, was part of it. I had been shut up in man's accidental death-like squares and cubes so long I had developed a mighty, unknown hunger, and now suddenly was being fed.

We curved and swung, bounced and rattled, and presently turned through an opening in a stone wall running beside the macadam and climbed a steep hill in protesting Model T low. We sprang out at a shout from the driver, a swarthy young Irish-German. The equipment came after in a stream, we stacked the bars, shovels, ropes and burlap and were soon levering several tons of tree into a hole in the ground. The foreman, Frank, was everywhere, in front, behind. He sprang back and forth, tossing

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rollers, shouting, wielding a crowbar, swinging a sledge. The huge ball of earth, embracing the roots of a tall white pine, tilted, took a steel roller in its teeth, and crunched snail-like ahead. This was action. When the tree finally got on the skids and plunged down the incline bucking over the rollers and everybody shouting, it was great fun. The earth smelled good, the living tree walked toward a new home. I liked this.

At noon I was tired and fiercely hungry. I had not half enough lunch. I ate my sandwiches waiting at the spigot to wash, and as several piled into the truck to go to a restaurant, so did I, to careen off in a small hurricane of dust. We were going to dine at the "Greek's" in the nearest town, Bryn Mawr. We were all young, I saw; the flying truck, driven recklessly over the sharply curved narrow roads was stimulating, we all shouted imprecations when we saw a bump coming, and laughed at the driver if he missed it. Each object or person along the road called forth comment, personal and otherwise. The idea seemed to be to make a joyful noise unto motion, and we did. As we passed the groups of girls from the famous girl's school, comparisons were indulged in at the top of the voice. The girls were haughtily indifferent, or timidly flustered, but the truck never slowed, going on at top speed, up hill and down, around corners on two wheels, to pull up at last, boiling, hissing out a cloud of steam, in front of the "Bryn Mawr Lunch, A. Marcos, prop." I hadn't enjoyed myself so much for a year, no not since high school had I had any fun. This carefree rolling was going to agree with me, I decided.

Now the days went swiftly, full of work and motion, bright days of trees and lawns, flowering shrubs and strange gardens, good work well done.

My pay jumped after the first few days; I took to the work and was soon the helper, second in charge of the gang. My health was better than it had ever been, things were brighter, the outdoors agreed with me.

Soon we were jumping from town to town, a close knit group of carefree, happy, hardy youths, enjoying the loose, hard life and harder work, the bright open days full of green and the smell of earth, the flash of steel and clink of chains, the roar of tractors and trucks and the everlasting push, push, get the work out.

Before a year had passed at my new work I was made a foreman.

Now I was the thinking part of the tree-moving gang, the head of all the activity about me. It was a growing firm, they were hard put to find experienced and capable young men willing to face the rigors of everyday outdoor work, of a roving life from town to town—wherever rich men wanted new grounds landscaped, and large trees planted to hide the bare newness.

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Three, four, five years went by. I was a hardened veteran of the calling. Then came a slip, a job that took too long, a lost customer, my refusal to shoulder the blame, the argument, and my freedom.

I began to look around at life again and to take stock of myself, my inner self. Meanwhile my brother had gotten a job in a city on the Great Lakes. My people were out there with him. I went to them.

I lazed about, sleeping long hours in the day, reading most of each night, and prowling about the city between times, trying to understand myself. Jobs were not, the depression was beginning, besides I did not want to work, I was sick of it, I needed something for my mind to grow on.

Moving through the crowded center city one hot afternoon, I found myself mentally sketching the figures of the people, their hats, walk, postures, gestures and noting the color and the masses of them. The realization of my need to draw, to paint, to model with my hands the shapes of life, struck me like a blow.

Taking the little money left from my years of work I went, one night to an art class I had seen advertised. In a little cubbyhole the old artist met me. This was his office, beyond lay the huge skylighted place that was the school. He was a bearded, stocky fellow, grizzled and bent, but with an energetically glittering eye which he fixed on me, beginning to talk at once as though he had been pent up for a long time.

"I suppose you want to be a great artist, eh?"

"No. I have no illusions." I grinned. "I just feel an itch to draw and want to try and see what good there is about art and all the talk and writing about it."

"You never drew before?"

"As a kid. I have been working at a full time job. But now I'm out of work, and my hands seem to want to draw." I surprised myself to be so articulate.

"Well, an artist finds art a full-time job, if he be a true artist. But let me tell you how I feel about art. I have spent my life in its study, with little reward, as other men see reward. But my real rewards are too great to put in words. I see, I feel, I understand all beauty in everything I see and touch much more so than a man who never analyzed the why of his enjoyment of vision. I can enjoy a look at a beautiful object as much as another enjoys a full meal. When you pursue beauty, you acquire a will to surmount, to create, to conquer the puzzle of beauty and form; you acquire will to beauty, and pleasure is beauty, or beauty becomes pleasure to you. You acquire a will that says: 'My mind will handle patterns dynamic, will create new startling thoughts for all to see—and it will be superior thought. Forms shaped into relations never before expressed, forms balanced into meaning

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man never meant before, colors saying a message of harmony that colors never said before, space divided into new concepts of space relation, volumes interrelated in strange, portentous solidities, the real of the flat contrasted with the unreal of the solid, the round. Form in painting expanded and exposed for the illusion that it is, form in sculpture elevated to the thing of real existence that it is. Truth defined so that any student can put out his hand to any painting or any work of art and say: this is truth, or this is untruth, and be correct. Truth defined, thought understood, the well springs of the creative urge explained and understood, life deified into the greatest of arts—which it is. Life relieved of its unmeaning and repetitious superfluities, life developed into good design so that living becomes art."

"I want to say something to you," I was eager to join my mind to this old man in considering. "What it is that is in my mind I have a hard time bringing out, but I know it. If you had always dreamed of a great underworld, a great empty place full of nothing but people who were either not people because so much less, or because so much more than people due to their environment, if you had always wanted to go to these people and help them with some great problem of theirs but been unable to find a way to go there, what would you do? If those words of yours about art and life design and how life should be, were seen by you in that underworld fulfilled so long ago it has been forgotten, but with all the traces and all the mechanisms still waiting where they were abandoned in the dry, hot dark so long ago; if you saw there all the walls full of paintings and standing with statues and architecture such as only a race of the kind your fulfilled ideals would be could produce; if you wanted to go there and knew not how, would you not want to draw, so as to tell others of this strange thing that your dreams tell you is true?"

"How can you tell that your dreams are true things?"

"Because they are not ordinary dreams; they are made by people who talk to me regularly over rays."

"Are you sure all this is not illusion—or delusion? It seems so very impossible."

"I am sure, but I know it is impossible to talk of such things and be understood or believed."

"I can believe you, almost. It is a strange world, an ignorant world, a little-understood world we live in. It can well be true, and indeed many ancient tales and even modern whispering rumors speak of such dark things as true. It can well be."

"It is so! And that is one reason that I want to learn to draw, to save something of the wonder of beings other than the known kinds of people for all men; that the source of much wisdom be plain in my work for the seeker to follow."

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"That is right, my son. The future, that is what we artists strive for, why we care not for appearances or wealth or solid things that other people seek to acquire. We strive for man, we are the pioneers of thought, and man is thought. If you will to do, do NOW and see the future grow before you. Thought is dynamic, acquisitive. It squares its pātterns as you perceive. It propagates as you fertilize. Get busy, and your perceptions will do the rest."

The old artist paused, his gleaming eyes fixed on me as though he willed to set fire to my soul. But I could not understand the whole import of his words. It would take time for me to digest these new thoughts. I could not answer, for I knew that any words I said would sound paltry beside the old artist's flaming thoughts. If I could learn anywhere, here was the place! I took some money from my pocket, laid it down, the old man took it, and wrote a receipt, which I thrust in my pocket and followed the old artist into the classroom.

There were a dozen or fifteen seated on stools before drawing boards, with their eyes fixed on a nude woman on a raised platform. I had wondered what would be my reaction to a nude model before me. While the white flesh struck me like a blow in the face, the cloud of floating hair, the colored drapery that set off the whiteness of the skin, were all sensuously beautiful. There was no lust in the room, I sensed, nor in myself. There was only concentration, silence, and the steady scratch of charcoal.

The bearded teacher gave me board, paper and a stick of charcoal. I seated myself, stuck the paper on the board with the tacks and started in. I held the stick like a pencil, but was corrected. I fixed my eyes upon the girl's white figure, my hand held before me, like my neighbors, and realized that never before had I gazed for long and concentrated my mind upon *woman*, even clothed WOMAN!

In life one seldom gazes for long upon any one thing. And here was the core of all desire, quite motionless before me, and I to gaze—I looked at the clock—for an hour and a half.

I began to draw. At first the arm refused to move, the little scratching strokes meant nothing, but watching my neighbors drawing with swift sure strokes, I quit the scratching and tried to draw swiftly, too. But I soon realized that I did not know what was before my eyes to see. In order to draw an arm, I had to wrap my mind around the arm, around the shoulder and the neck, around the torso. I found that each shadow and light upon the flesh meant bones and muscles underneath which I did not understand. My hand dropped in despair, my arm was tired. The black marks on the paper were meaningless. I sat studying the white form, the related roundness of thigh and hip, of breast

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and arm. Time would pass before I could draw a figure, I saw that.

The girl next to me, whom I had noted dazedly when I first entered, leaned toward me, her face close to me, saying: "Having trouble?"

Her face was impish, the eyebrows raised, a frown came and went between her eyes invisibly, her neck was long with faint Venus rings in the soft flesh.

"Why yes," I answered. "I can't seem to hang her together at all." I looked at her capable drawing, the solid chunks of flesh she had described, and back into her face.

"Listen," she said, laughing a little. "Don't think when you draw; just feel. Draw fast at first, make a lot of drawings and rub 'em out, they're no good, the beginnings, you know. Don't worry about what it looks like, just draw with loose easy motions. It won't take long." Her voice was husky, and her eyes wise on mine. I lit a cigarette and leaned back. Presently the class was over. I stood up, stretching.

"I'm hungry," I said to the girl.

"So am I," she answered. "I always eat after class; do you want to go along?"

I grinned and nodded. I had not expected her to invite me. I followed in her wake as the class trooped out with a great chattering. The numerous brasslipped stairs rattled past our feet. Presently we were seated facing each other in a Greek restaurant. She rested her chin in her hands; her unusually long fingers running up her soft cheeks far part her eyes. It was a pretty pose for her, I thought. She must have practiced it. Which flattered me, that she should like me enough to extend herself.

"Tell me something about yourself," she commanded, mocking me with that inviting mouth, her eyelids dark and heavy on her eyes.

"The name is Dick Shaver, the occupation unemployed — with several ex-professions."

"Well, I'll pay my check," she smiled, trying to embarrass me. Evidently it was funny to see me flush.

"Oh, lord, I didn't mean that. I've dough enough yet for awhile. Besides my brother is always trying to give me some. I've got plenty."

We went out into the night. The moon hung above the dark streets, too low, too ruddy and saying odd, mysterious things in a dulled and golden voice.

"Shall we walk. I only live about a mile, and it's warm." Her voice rang a little with something of the dull gold from the moon in it.

We started down the street. She took my arm, and skipped to fall into step with me. She was nearly as tall as I, and her heels clicked in time with my own stride. That was a good feeling, to swing together that way. She bent her long neck and looked up into my face. There was a little

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ruddy moon in each of her eyes, gleaming softly.

A white lust grew and unfolded swiftly within me, like some fungoid plant it sent its mycelium through my being so that I shuddered. The shadows were sticky, clinging, too dark and full of a red thinking that was alien to me, but that drew me irresistibly. In the back of my mind now familiar watching, hidden figures went back and forth softly.

What was going on? My whole body was shuddering now with the effects of the stim ray, unfelt for so long during my outdoor life. But somehow the familiar voice of Nydia was lacking. Nor was the technique like hers. After so many years, I had come to know the touch of her skilled hand at the stim machine —there is a personality about it, an unmistakable character. This new hand was utterly different, but oh, how practiced!

I stared hard at the girl walking lithely beside me. She *must* feel the rays! Their focus was certainly wide enough. I saw her eyes catch mine impishly, and in them a fire that could not be hidden. She knew!

"Here's where I live," she said. There was no dismissal in her voice. And even if there had been, I could not have gone. The compulsion of the ray was driving my feet forward, inevitably, and as I went, I wondered why. Why should they be giving me now something they had always denied me, either because of Max, interfering with his usual sadism, or because of Nydia, and her sweet girlish jealousy?

A sudden thought struck me, and my heart went cold. Was Nydia dead! Was this new hand at the ray because my cavern companion of the dream world of the night was gone? In my mind I heard a familiar voice, the voice of she of the long lips, the great one herself, who had given me the benefit of her warding these many years. *"No, Nydia is not dead."*

Under the inconceivable power of the ray, now, I could not think more, nor question more. Only the reality of the moment was of any concern to me. I followed this strange girl who knew, this girl who had not even told me her name, up the stairway to her doorway. She did not pause, so I followed her inside. It was an apartment house, a big arched opening into a hall with several passages. We turned up one, she fitted a key in the lock, and held the door for me. I went into the dark and stood waiting. The place had a faint perfume, a heavy scent that hung on me like a soft arm, invisible. The light did not go on. I turned back to where she stood by the door. I took her in my arms, half hesitant, unsure, yet as hungry as a wolf. Her body bent against me, that long neck leaned back pale, a column of strange music in the dark. I found her lips, soft, warm, hungry and somehow pitying. I had not expected this. But thinking disappeared in a slow reaching that burned me. Images

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of passionate revels from some vanished past came before my eyes, and white melting rounds that flowered into red-centered flower entities came toward me one by one, growing and spreading to blot out all but the ecstasy of her.

When we were full of each other, we lay back, and she whispered into my ear. "Now let us dream," she said. "A dream of wonderful adventure in a day long ago, when Earth was young . . ."

I was startled, and turned to peer at her. "How can you *know* of these things, and *control* them . . . ?" I began. But her eyes fastened on mine with a compulsion that could not be denied, and with surprise growing in me, yet dying away into darkness because of the overwhelming wave of energy that seemed to pass to me from her eyes, I succumbed to the spell of the dream-makers. My last thought was: "She? A dream-maker? But how can it be . . . ?"

CHAPTER SIX

I WAS not Dick Shaver, but another man entirely. My body was huge yet I was aware that I was very young in actual count of years. My sturdy legs were cased in knee boots of glistening gold-colored synthetic leather, my body in a skintight covering of overlapping golden scales that formed a flexible protection like armor. Upon my head I wore a scarlet helmet that contained thought detection apparatus, for I heard voices and movements nearby although the chamber where I stood was apparently empty. One voice sounded, although distant, particularly peremptory. It was a feminine voice and one that I, Bar Mehat, recognized with a little grimace of half annoyance.

I tossed my head petulantly so that the red-gold hair that fell to my shoulders in shining waves swung loosely with the action. One of my broad, red-haired hands touched the lever of the console before which I stood. A clicking mechanism stopped and was followed by a musical hum like the spinning of a giant top. Dim luminosity pulsed about me. In a four-foot circular mirror above the console a silvery aura flickered madly, to coalesce slowly into the likeness of a young and attractive woman.

Her lips moved and it was then as though she were present in the room with me, for her voice sounded with clarity in my ears.

"Bar, the thing is growing faster than our control of it. It actually threatens all life on our planet. Jormungandur is not a joke."

"Certainly he is no joke; but why fret yourself, who are on land, about Jormungandur who lives in the sea?"

"As long as he kept to the sea why should I worry about him?" cried the young woman resentfully. "It is because he is creeping up out of the sea that I

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am disturbed. His body now stretches over the land. His tentacles have spread over half the unsettled portion of Afrik. They are each a hundred leagues long and they grope continually for food. If he takes a notion to crawl out of the water for a breath of air it means the ruin of all the Atlans' work on Mu."

"Has no one done anything to check the Worm?" asked I, in some wonderment for although the Covenant forbade direct attacks that might result in death, yet there was some allowance for self-defense in cases of unbridled encroachment even against an honored and intelligent Ancient like Jormungandur, who was friendly to the early Atlans.

"We have a dozen great disrays raying at the tentacles but as fast as we disintegrate them he throws out others. It seems futile even to continue for we get nowhere with all our efforts."

"Jormungandur," I mused aloud. "The Worm that encircles the world. Why, Gracia, he was here before the Atlans colonized Mu. Mu is practically his property. Are you sure that it is quite legal under the Covenant to attack him, even if the attack seems futile?"

"This is no time for joking, Bar Mehat of Thor," somewhat acidly expostulated the young woman. "Either you agree to bring sufficient military forces to take a planet from Mephisto himself, or you do nothing, and I look elsewhere for assistance against this peril," cried my cousin with scathing implication.

"I shall arrive to banish The Worm before another sunrise," I promised.

My hand reversed the lever. The image of the pretty young woman faded from the surface of the mirror and once again it reflected only my broad face.

I mused to my reflection: "The Worm, a threat! Gods, one should really have known that it would happen some day. Now I, the simple warrior, am called upon by my dear cousin to do my duty by my family. And in what a cause!"

I thought, that as chief heir of all the possessions of the Province of Thor, I could muster enough military strength to take a planet or even to blast Jormungandur. I addressed myself to the task by pressing a stud marked "General Alarm to Thor Guard" and spoke rapidly and authoritatively.

"Officers of the Thor Guard are to muster all strength at once for an expedition against the Worm Jormungandur who has become a threat by tossing his tentacles over much land in search of food. Anything that can fly or float on water, throw a ray or carry a bomb is to be made ready for extended travel immediately."

Through my mind in an undertone to the business now in hand ran the history of the At-

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lan struggle with growth on this planet of Mu. Under the beneficient rays of the new-born sun nothing aged or ceased growth, and existence had depended therefore, those first centuries of our colonization, upon keeping encyclopaedic notes on every form of life on the globe, in order the better to forecast the future development of each species. For as the humble caterpillar changes to the miraculously different moth, so did these new creatures of Mu develop startling metamorphoses and variations. Since none of them died, and since but little of the planet was as yet explored or settled, strange and numerous were the threats to our continued existence which came out of the dense jungles or out of the fathomless depths of the seas, ravening down upon our attempts at an ordered and cultured life.

Most of these tremendous monsters of growth had been slain by past heroes. The number of giant life forms that made us Atlans trouble were legion, but somehow Jormungandur the Sea Worm had escaped our general war against them. The Worm had always seemed safely confined to the seas and he had moreover agreed to the terms of the Covenant, hence the Worm had never been considered as a threat to existence on Mu, despite the fact that under the fecund rays of the new born sun his growth would have been predicated as in itself a threat.

The jungles in which lived those giant variants of life were, if considered for themselves alone, terrifically beautiful dreams of life growth. The trees seemed to grow upward forever, and to be topless. There was no average size from the tiniest stalk to the trunks of some ancient trees that were acres in extent. They were the result of centuries of unimpeded, unchecked growth under completely favorable conditions. For as yet, nothing aged and died on Mu.

But the planet continued to harbor many dangerous and threatening life forms: dread serpents with a hunger beyond description; a race of giants from a detrimental planet. Thor knew that eventually these alien life forms would also become a problem. They would have to be weeded out since only conflict can be expected from life forms not of the same source pattern as those on the planet.

I embarked on the flagship of the fleet that in a matter of hours was flashing over the tremendous sea of earthy waves that was North Afrik.

Our spaceships settled behind a convenient range of mountains over which we could see the tentacles of the Worm writhing like titanic serpents against the morning sky. Here and there blazed the fiercely brilliant orange of powerful disintegrating rays and even at that distance the smell of roasting flesh was

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noticeable; unpleasantly so. We broke out our smaller scout planes for reconnaissance. I went aboard the foremost.

As our scout planes shot upward, a long vee of strange planes boomed up from the south and shot past our formation in a northerly direction. I had thought I was familiar with every type of plane on Mu, from jet to nose-ray, but the design of those planes was entirely strange to me. They disappeared from my sight, but not from my questing mind. Strange planes above Mu were not to be ignored; their presence might be forerunner of grave trouble.

I knew that killing a thing with the growth rate and titanic strength of Jormungandur was not going to be a simple matter. His body was nearly five hundred miles long and was of incalculable mass. Its nature was much that of the starfish; break it in twain, and both halves grow. That his great age had developed mental reactions of a kind similar to human thought was known to us from the fact that this had been true of other monsters of growth on Mu. I was shortly to learn just how far this mental development of the oldest and most monstrous creature on Mu had been carried by the beneficial rays of the newborn sun.

I returned to my scout plane and thence to the flagship of our air fleet. My ship was equipped with the mechanisms that would put all space at my command, to be seen and heard and to throw my voice into the ears of those whom I willed to hear it. I had the ship hover over that part of the ocean between the continents of Atlantis and South Afrik, that particular spot where it had been said that men had talked with the Worm many a long day ago. I switched on the vis-ray, and it sank miles deep into the murky depths. At last, after I had turned it hither and yon, there flowed on the visi-screen like twin moons the awful eyes of the most ancient life on Mu.

The telaug revealed his thoughts to me and I pitied him as that river of desperate and weary meaning flowed from the thought cloud like the drifting soul of a lost sea. The Worm was hungry. He was weary of the emptiness of a life that contained nothing but slumber and feeding. His groping tentacles were no longer able to find sufficient food and he was bitterly resentful at a fate which had given him life which he found it difficult to sustain, and later had given him thoughts so that he understood what he was. For long I pondered that wretched but intriguing life that was the brain center of the Worm. At last I spoke, sending my voice to the distant Worm's lair.

"Garm," said I—in Afrik and near parts Jormungandur was called Garm, "Garm, speak to me. Give me an answer, for I am your friend if you will have me so. From the darkness that shrouds you, from the gloom in

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which you must wallow in the abyss of ocean's depths, speak to me, who wishes you well. It is Bar Mehat of Thor who calls you."

That deep river of gloomy meditation ceased its slow flow and concentrating itself reluctantly, looked out of the pale lucent orbs that were Garm's eyes. Great abstract thoughts welled up the ray and flung themselves on the thought-cloud like corpses pushing upward for release from the sucking ooze that clung to them. That husky, thick voice enunciated words with heavy difficulty.

"It is long since Man has sought me out. What would you of Garm?"

"In the old days, Garm, you were one of the few of the serpent race who upheld the Covenant's code. Why have you foresaken the ways of peace? Why are you now unfriendly to Man? Your body is now partly on land, and it is land upon which my family has expended much labor. Now all that constructive work is spoiled and many good men whom in the old days you would have called friends, rejoicing that they lived on Mu, those men have died under your long arms' fatal suctions. Must we then slay you, Garm, that we may live?"

"Once I loved men," he slowly answered at last, his thick voice dull with a kind of indifference that troubled me, the listener. "I loved them for the bright pictures they sent me and for the beautiful children they bore. I loved them for the tales they told me of their lively doings in the sun. But now they have long forgotten me, and I raven for food.

"I am grown too big to feed myself well, even though I draw from the vast seas in which I lie. It may be that you must kill me, for I know not and care not longer what I do. Life holds no significance for me. I have outgrown life, perhaps."

"Garm, I think that if you will but be reasonable, we may find some way to feed you, so that you may continue to live on," I offered, my emotion being one of real sympathy for a creature so outgrown that we could not by any means within our power send it to a larger planet. Or so I thought at that impulsive moment.

The voice of Garm droned on: "Once a man of your line went a-fishing. Yes, I recognize you for one of Thor's line. For a joke I took the bait between my jaws and raised up my head near his skiff. He was, like all of your blood, a stubborn fellow and he pulled the bottom out of his boat, trying vainly to land me. At least, that was his pretense.

"After I had carried him ashore on my back we talked for a long, lovely time, he sitting on the sand and I with my head lying on the sandy beach beside him. He told me a tale of another such serpent as myself, grown too long for comfortable

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living on his birthplace, and he predicted that the same fate lay in store for me, unless I found death by some other means. That great serpent encroached the land as do I, and when the time came that abundant food was no longer available, he took his own tail between his jaws and swallowed it, and after many years he died thus.

"It may be that I shall do that thing, though of late I do not love men or their doings."

I pondered the great Being's bitter words and at last I spoke thoughtfully.

"You must know something of our thought magic, Garm? If you will do that thing the other great serpent did, we will arrange that before you do it you shall have many weeks of continual pleasure dreams. You shall sense in dreams glorious matings and victorious struggles. We will give you the equivalent of many lives of pleasure.

"This will take much energy that we could well spend elsewhere, but it will be worth that to us to rid us of your overgrowing, enormous appetite that is becoming so destructive. We will pay you in full and you know that we are honorable. You can weigh this thing well. Will you take our word and after your dreams die honorably, a true son of the Covenant?"

"Bar Mehat of Thor," answered the great serpent, "if your dream-makers deal honorably with me, so will I deal with you. And this you cannot have known, that besides yielding up my life there is a thing or two which I have learned that I will grant you freely without concealment. I know your magic, but your dream-makers may weigh the value of their own lives in the balance of their calculation as to what dreams they give me, for I have means of saving them or letting them drift on to death that will seize upon them unawares. Tell them that, O Son of the Past Great, and bid them measure me out abundance of glorious dreams in gratitude."

Thus it was that I talked with the Worm Jormungandur. And thus it came to pass that Garm told me of things that I knew were true, for I had seen that flight of strange planes that headed for the dense forests that we Atlans had thus far left practically unexplored.

"Strange outlanders came over my seas in great ships and hovered long, sending me their promises of many dreams, as you have done. But they did not ask my death, Bar Mehat; they asked my living aid.

"I learned somewhat of their dreams, and their dreams are not my kind of dreams, Bar of the old line of Thor. There is no light laughter, and there are no gallant young ones with them. Their lives have been miseries of ever-lasting warring. I want no part of such wretched dreams.

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"But they had a ray which they can put upon any part of my body and through that ray control me. So when I gave no consent to their supplications, they forced a part of me to lay waste such portions of Afrik as lies between the two great rivers. So, if you seek them out, where they have hidden themselves within the Dark Lands, you will know whence any coming trouble sources."

"I have seen their spaceships, Garm. I knew them for outlanders," I explained. "We shall take steps at once."

"They mean to take over the Earth and to develop fecundly. They come from a quarantined planet and have somehow eluded the Atlan Patrols. They believe they can win over the Mu folk before help can be called in from greater space against them. How they expect to hold Mu against the entire Atlan space navy, once they have won Mu, I fail to understand. But they are stupid, despite their mechanisms of power, and perhaps they think not of it, or expect by crafty trickery to cheat the Atlans into letting them alone on Mu."

An idea flashed into my mind as I stood staring at Garm's vast head, looking into his fierce elder-wise eyes, twin greenish silver moons flickering through sea water.

"Garm, in the caverns where we breed life forms, our technicians have a way of removing the brain from an animal, a living brain, and putting it into a metal bottle where it lives on, fed by fluid foods and synthetic blood. Since you are grown too big for this Earth, will you consent that we may put your brain into a bottle and keep it for a record of the past?

"You have certain wisdoms which you can teach youth, and you like the young, laughter-filled fold of our Mu people. Later, after you have grown accustomed to our ways on land, you will have many friends, and later yet some colonizing expedition can take you with them and plant your living brain into a young reptile on some other planet.

"You may live your life over again and again. Do the Der men offer you anything of like value? And in return for this prolongation of your life, will you then aid us against them?"

The limpid moon eyes flickered into near opacity as the Worm concentrated upon this new and far more interesting proposition I had proffered. I waited patiently for his response and felt certain it would be affirmative. After all—

The thick voice came slowly after a long wait. The moon eyes had cleared and shone greenly through the sea water.

"I accept your offer," said the Worm. "I would fain live on and see your brave new worlds that else I might never visit. I am ready to accompany you when you give me the word that you are ready to attack those inter-

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lopers from a quarantined planet. I dislike their warring and resent bitterly that the people of Mu must be forced into battles because of them. Yes, Bar Mehat of Thor, I am your ally against them.

"And when the battling is done with, and you have driven them from Mu, then you shall send me first the dreams for which I yearn in my now empty existence. After I have had my fill of dreams, I shall let your technicians have my brain and preserve it as you have said. Some day I shall again live in liberty in the body of another serpent on some greater planet. Yes, Bar Mehat, I agree."

I was overjoyed at Garm's decision for something told me that he would be an ally not to be scorned in the battle that must ensue shortly between my forces and those invaders from a detrimental planet.

Thus it was that when my forces made ready to advance into the Dark Lands where the invaders had entrenched themselves in expectation of our coming, Garm's tremendous body flowed after the army of Thor's men. The sight of him was comforting as we pressed on into the night of the jungle.

Like the mighty leaders of prior times I strapped to my back my anti-grav packs and flitted ahead with my scouts. These anti-grav packs enabled us to rise to a considerable height above the ground, which was a great advantage in entering that jungle where otherwise we must have been obliged to spend much precious time slashing down the heavy undergrowth. A number of the scouts were to go on ahead, it was arranged, and I flitted not far behind, with another squad of scouts in my rear. After these came the main body of our troops. It was while I went on in this way that I saw the girl in the trees, and learned what kind of enemy we had to face.

She was wearing an anti-grav pack and she had depended upon it to escape the swaying head of a monster reptile whose coils lay over the rude path that ran for some short distance into the forest. She had apparently no weapons of defense or had lost what she had possessed, in her flight from the great snake. Now she was entangled in the thorny, shielding branches of the tree to which she had flown, and the serpent seemingly did not care to thrash about against those prickly thorns with which it was equipped. I alighted on the branch where the girl clung.

"What has happened? Have you no weapons?"

"It came upon me so suddenly," she faltered, "that I dropped my ray-gun. And what use is a knife against that scaly skin?"

I looked at the reptile. It would have to be eliminated, or its presence would block the advance of my men. Moreover, the creature had set its stupid mind

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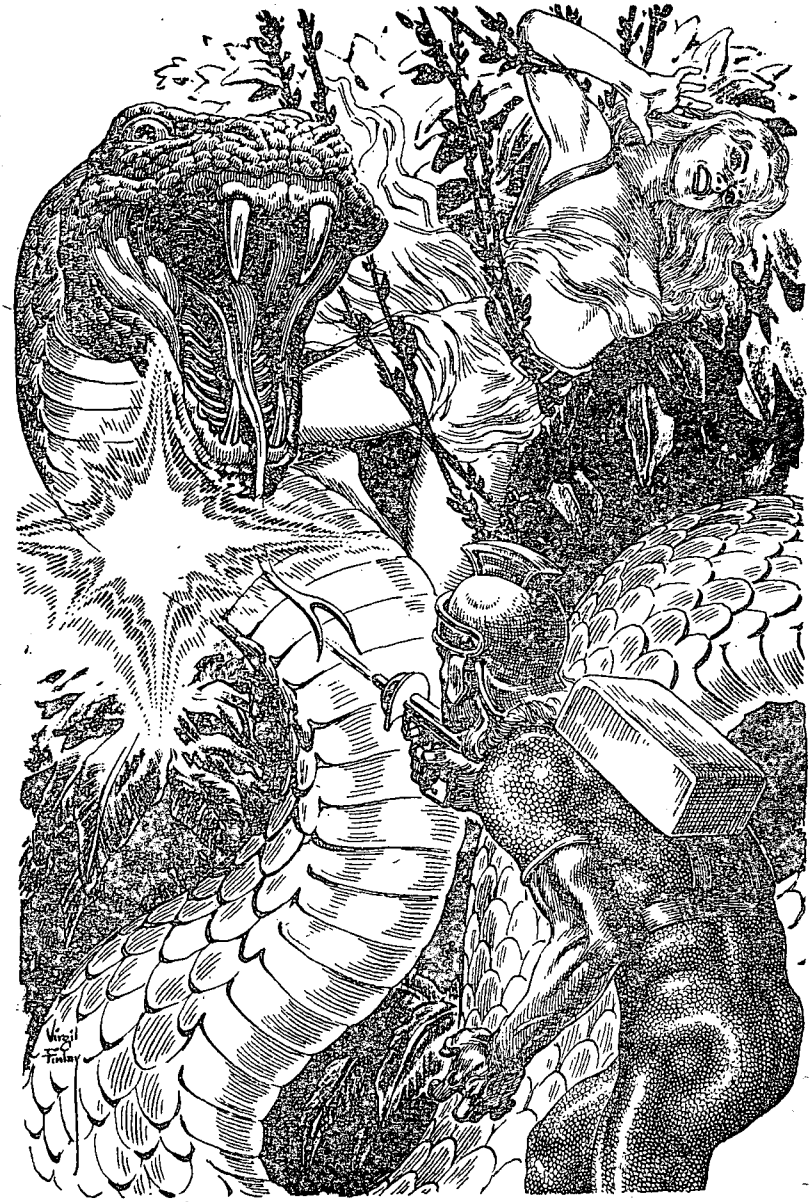

Bar Mehat fired into the reptile's hideous mouth.

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upon capturing what probably seemed to it legitimate prey, and it kept its evil eyes hypnotically upon the girl.

"The thing must be slain," I said boldly.

I scrambled up the scaly back to the bumpy ridge of its spine. Then I pulled my disintegrating ray from the holster and blasted a shot through the center of the spine, severing the spinal cord. I raced lightly, depending upon the anti-grav pack to lift me as I leaped, until I had reached the head of the titanic and maddened reptile. At every alternate bound I blasted another path through the spine, leaving behind as I went a paralyzed column of motionless flesh. As I reached the taper of the mighty neck the great head turned, jaws gaping to slay this stinging insect that had wrought such swift destruction, but with swiftly triggered blasts I cut the last nerves at the base of the head. Red threatening maw and evilly gleaming eyes dropped supinely to the earth.

The girl scrambled lightly down from the tree and threw herself at my feet and flung her arms about my knees, embracing them with heartfelt thanksgiving. There seemed to me no time for amenities and I lifted her face and looked piercingly into her wide blue eyes. It seemed to me that I saw mirrored therein a clean and innocent soul and I felt well rewarded for my strenuous and perilous combat with that monster reptile. I surmised that this girl was an outlaw Atlan, else she would scarcely have been at large in the forests. I asked her directly.

"Yes, I am an outlaw."

I did not care to take time to ask her why, but I did feel that she could be trusted.

"We seek those who drive the great beasts to attack the Atlan cities. Do you know where they have hidden themselves, maiden?"

"You must be Bar Mehat," she said, ignoring my query.

"I am indeed Bar Mehat of Thor," I assented with impatience.

"Then I am for you. I owe you my life. I belong to the forest people, of whom you must know. We are outlaws and hide always from such as you. Among us came, not too many years ago great ships with many guns.

"They are not like us," she continued. "They have skins colored and blotched like lizards. Like the chameleon lizards. Somewhat on the order of man are they, with four limbs. Their webbed feet have prehensile toes and their hands are long-fingered. They have a long, fleshy tail that tapers to a whip-like point, hanging from their rumps. They have large, flat heads and their eyes are lidless and reptilian, and are covered with a translucent membrane for protection. Oh, how evilly red those eyes can glitter!"

"Their features, maiden. Do they resemble men?"

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"Oh, no, Bar Mehat. Their noses are small and flat and their mouths are wide. They have no chins and their teeth are heavy fangs. Oh, they are most horrible to look upon."

I lifted her to her feet.

"I take it, maiden, that you must be aware from your familiarity with the forest of where these lizard men have entrenched themselves. Is your anti-grav pack in good order? It is? Then come with me."

So we went on together and as we went the girl continued to tell me of those pirates of space who had escaped from their quarantined planet.

"They promised us forest folk riches and power and security. Many fair promises they made if we would help them drive out you Atlans. They come from the forbidden spaces where death reigns," she shuddered. "They do not worship the dark gods of space as you Atlans and we forest folk do, for they believe in no good thing. They have learned that death has not yet come to Mu and they think that now, before the Atlans are too well settled, they can drive you out and learn to live as the gods live, by studying your cities and the minds of their captives.

"They are very evil and some things they do made me so fearful that I fled into the deeper forest that I might see them no more. You see, Bar Mehat, whenever an Atlan sees how they work, he becomes their enemy automatically, for it is impossible to know when one pleasures or displeases them, so that it is inevitable that one will in the end be tortured to death. Oh, I am glad to see the men of Atlan coming here in force to banish those foul invaders!"

A cry arose from the scouts in the van and we hastened to join them. The cause of the outcry was simple, after all. They had spotted a *dero* hidden like a chameleon against a dark tree trunk, the faint patterning of his lizard-like skin betraying him, for in his perturbation at our approach it turned from rose to purple, to inky black, then again to faint rose. Our men had overpowered him although he was armed with a projectile weapon.

The girl touched my arm.

"Did I speak truth, Bar Mehat?" she demanded. "Is he not as I described him?"

He was indeed as she had told me. I examined his weapon with interest. It was a glass-like gun activated by air pressure and fired a tiny, brittle, venom-filled needle that broke on contact releasing the poison into the veins of the victim. One of the great cats that infrequently lurk nearer the confines of the forest gave me a chance to test the poison. I fired the gun and the cat whirled and then fell as if paralyzed. Inspections showed that it still lived, but it was incapable of any action, save that its furious eyes glared upon us whom it had been unable to

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escape. We later found that the venom was similar in effect to wasp venom in that it permanently paralyzed the victim, but left him alive for future reference, as it were.

Later, too, we learned that the lizard men had wasp habits in yet other ways, for they, too, kept their victims living for long periods of time before eating them.

I called for an augmented helmet and ordered it clapped on the prisoner's flat head. It was a matter of a few minutes only when his thought, with tremendous augmentation, was flowing back over my entire following forces. In this way I knew my men would be aware of just what they were about to engage in deadly conflict.

These lizard creatures had evolved on a small planet under a very large new sun. While it was not a deadly sun, its rays being full of beneficial vibrants, yet its disintegrant induction had been a tremendous factor in their development. Their will to live had been great, but their will to destroy was as full, thus coloring all their thoughts with vicious intent, for the will to destroy and the disintegrant electric forces are one and the same. While the seed of greatness was perhaps within them, it had been buried irretrievably beneath a rigid discipline of the revolting kind which allowed the individual little freedom save the right to reproduce.

We had barely finished the broadcast of the lizard man's thoughts when a tremendous crystal sphere sailed overhead and paused above the midst of our array, for by now my forces had caught up with our scouting vanguard. Then, with a loud report, it flew asunder and there rained down upon us tiny slivers of light that seemed faery spears, playing in all direction. At least a dozen of my best men fell sprawling to the ground as if paralyzed and at that we all knew what had been in that crystal sphere. It was a bomb, full of compressed air and packed with tiny capsule needles of the paralyzing venom of the lizard men. It was a most effective weapon and we could not, unfortunately, determine its exact source at that moment.

After that first one, sphere after sphere hissed down upon us through the air and Atlan's bravest fell in windrows. Some of our men thought it a good idea to pick off the spheres with disintegrating ray rifles, but this resulted in the bombs bursting high in the sky, only to rain the venomous needles more widely upon our heads. I had ordered huge disintegrators, mounted high on trucks at our rear, to drop sweeping fans of destruction into the forest ahead of us. Their range was almost incredible, so that fires of many miles in width sprang up ahead. At long last the spheres decreased in numbers and I felt that our rays must have destroyed some sta-

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tion from which they had been dispatched.

I had been well aware that to use a large disintegrator in the jungle was an infraction of the Covenant's code, but if any intelligent life existed simultaneously with those lizard men in the jungle ahead, it was self-doomed by failure to warn us Atlans of the impending attack. All rules are tossed overboard in war, sooner or later. That forest fire, which under ordinary circumstances would never have been allowed to rage, among those trees so big that a man could hardly grasp their immensity even with his imagination, was a sight never to be forgotten.

We Atlans have a curious way of putting out such fires. We have an atomized carbon ray which we spray into the downdrafts around the flames. This is activated carbon, more inflammable than ordinary carbon, and divided with extreme fineness so that its particles are driven along by certain waves of light. Thus an atomic carbon ray is formed which is sprayed over the fire. The carbon did not, as might be thought, increase the intensity of the fire, for the finely divided carbon combines with the oxygen of the air, blanketing the whole area with carbon dioxide, so as the rays swept the fire ahead, it died.

As the fire broke a way through, my forces marched, leaped or soared over the smoking jungle. To the danger from the enemy army that must be ahead was added that of falling limbs from the great trees that stretched a mile overhead. Once in a while the smouldering embers would burst into flame that would leap skyward through the now dried-out framework of lower limbs, but a few well-directed sweeps of the atomic carbon rays extinguished these as fast as they sprang up.

It was a relief to all my thirsty, soot-covered men, when we sighted the enemy's camps. Uttering shrill cries calculated to fill us with apprehension, the lizard men at once set up a barrage of venom glass needles to halt our advance. Forewarned by our prior experience I had ordered that some of our huge disintegrators enroute, approximately a hundred, be adapted to prepare from their rays what is called a wind-ray. This is a dual ionizing ray, one ray positively ionizing the air and another negatively ionizing the air. When the rays are held far apart a gentle breeze springs up between them as the molecules of air, drawn by the attracting charges they bear, rush down to neutralize their charge and are pushed aside or spread by the outer in-rushing air. When they are held closely together and highly energized, a terrible vortex of inrushing and uprushing wind is formed. These hastily adapted devices were posted like horns of a crescent on either side of our advancing lines.

As the first crystal globes

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hissed overhead, these wind-rays swung into action. Thus the globes, instead of falling, shot into the air like rubber balls on a tossing fountain and, juggling them like circus performers, our expert ray men flung them back into the air over the enemy's camp and then released them, to harry our tormentors by their own venomous weapons. This return barrage was greeted by howls of dismay from the lizard men as their own pigeons came home to roost.

Our penetras came into action also, sweeping over the whole area in our van, so that whatever was opaque became transparent. What had seemed merely earth and forest growth for half a mile ahead of my forces was revealed, so that we saw and knew what the lizard men were keeping behind walls.

What we beheld was most intriguing to my forces. The men bellowed with huge guffaws over the outlanders' methods. In improvised underground pens they had collected overgrown monsters of every description. Held in those narrow tunnels, and fed but little for a long period, these creatures had become ravenous with bestial hunger. Various types of disintegrating rays and venom-ball throwers, as well as other weapons the nature of which was strange to us then, had been attached to the animals' backs. The purpose of this arrangement was obscure until the lizard men threw open the barred doors to the tunnels.

Out rushed the maddened beasts. Mammoths, titanotheres, titanosaurs, dinosaurs and huge serpents rushed down upon us. The ray apparatus on their backs was automatic, sending a beam in a wide arc ahead of the beasts. This beam, a dual ionizer like our wind-ray, completed the circuit when it struck metal. It was then that we realized the new peril we were encountering. The resulting flow of current through the beam activated the firing mechanism for the disintegrating ray. Since all our weapons were fabricated of metal, while those of the lizard men were made out of glass or plastic, these enraged living ray-tanks loosed upon us were more than a subject for laughter, as we had thought when we first saw them through the walls of their tunnels.

At first we held off the terrific onslaught. Our superb gunners picked off the beasts as rapidly as they approached within range, yet the heavy discharges released into the air began to blanket the whole fighting area with a stifling thought-blocking disintegrating charge. One could hardly move one's limbs because of the effect of this detrimental electric, which leaped like Hell-fires from every bush, every piece of metal, every blade of grass, making the vision hollow with the disillusion of despair.

It was not long before our fire was slowed by this subtle nerv-paralyzing influence and the beasts pounded nearer in over-

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powering numbers, their combined weights shaking the earth beneath us, their great maws roaring, and over their fierce heads flashed ever the automatic fire rays, every flash marking a hit on some metal weapon of ours. Whether this was defeat, or whether the disillusion from the strong detrimental that so subtly held our minds under its potent spell was powerful enough to check our aggressive action, things began to look very dark for Mu. And then—

Over our cowering heads reared the vast bulk of the Worm. No metal to complete a circuit in that engine of destruction! His curling, mile-long tentacles lashed out, and every beast they touched was caught up, crushed, and tossed aside, a menace no longer. He was the most awe-inspiring being I had ever seen, with the great moons of his eyes reflecting his fierce battle joy. One could almost hear the thought in his vast dragon head:

"After all these dull, uneventful centuries, what bliss to fight again for the sons of the friends of my youth! Yea! It is good!" From the throat of Garm a great rumbling roar issued and seemed to shape into words. "On, Atlans! On, Atlans!" And the mighty serpent-hiss terminated the roaring words.

The great Worm's bulk blotted the sun from overhead so that we fought in the shade as though twilight had descended upon us. From our van we could see the planes of the lizard men taking to the air as they retreated in mad rout from this unconquerable serpent of the ancient days long past. For following upon the appearance of Garm the invaders were, for the most part speeding away, leaving behind them their dead and wounded and the blazing ruins of their camp. The maddened beasts which they had starved and then released upon us were careening off in all directions for the control rays that had kept them advancing upon us in attack now stood abandoned, their tall masts no longer flashing with energy sparks. The battle was over, save that a few of our fastest planes trailed the fugitive enemy, their purpose not to do battle, but to determine the destination of the lizard men that we might report it to the Space Police.

I stood there with my men as they bivouacked amid jubilant cries of triumph. Suddenly blackness rushed down upon me and I knew no more of the lizard men or of Garm slowly withdrawing into the sea, or of anything until a light flashed through the darkness and I became aware of an odd popping sound.

I awoke, and even as the scream rang in my ears, so close beside me, I knew that I was Dick Shaver, and not Bar Mehat, and that I was no longer dreaming. But as I turned in the direction of the scream, in the bed beside me, I screamed myself, and wished that I *were* dreaming.

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But I knew I was not. Horror and terror swept over me as never before in all my life. For, lying beside me, her nude body blackened and smoking, though the bedclothes were barely scorched, was the girl of the art class. That she was dead there was no question—and that she had died almost instantly in a wave of incomprehensible heat that now radiated upon me so that I hurled myself from the bed to escape it, was also obvious. I knew where that heat had come from, and my terror was complete. Only the most evil of the caverns used this heat ray, and not even Max knew its secret. There was only one answer, and I had to flee, instantly, or I was doomed!

I clutched my clothing from the floor, staggered to the door, flung it open, and rushed down the corridor outside. Behind me flames began to lick from the room where, a few hours ago, passion unknown to common man of the surface had flamed as hotly, although not as redly. I scrambled into my pants, and with shoes and shirt in hand, rushed out into the night and down a dark alleyway. Panic pursued me on winged feet—and death, I knew, could not be far behind.

I heard my little friend of the dark screaming at me, and her screaming voice was for me alone. She told me to go from that city and to go far, for the mad ones had come and were killing in the underworld, and they would kill me too, for knowing the ancient secret and what it was.

And I learned, too, what had happened in that room behind me. The dream ray had been focused on us, and the popping sound I had heard was the heat ray of the mad ones, being conducted along the electric of the dream-makers' ray, to burst in all its fury upon my companion of the art class. Only her intervening body had saved me from her own fate, taking the full force of the heat bolt!

I fled from that city as though the Devil himself pursued me, as indeed he did! For what else is the Devil than this? And as I went, the gibbering horror I heard around me, and beneath me in the earth abated. But I knew there was no security anywhere near this city. I must keep on fleeing or die.

Without money, I had to thumb my way, and it was not easy. But like a homing pigeon, my thumb led me to the road to Philly, and at last the homely figure of Billy Penn was close overhead. Here, I felt, I would be safe, for was it not here that the woman of the long underlip who looked like Mother Hull in the fairy tale had accepted me, and had promised to ward all danger from me, and to give me the chance to live the life that could be lived in no other way, without the protection of such as her?

I went back to the same room where I had first stayed in

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Philly, with my brother. Although I had no money, I persuaded the landlady to rent me the room, which she did because she remembered me, and felt sure her rent was good. As I went to sleep that night, my flight of panic ended, I could hear the ancient weaving machine that does not exist, and the woman with the long underlip bent over me. I wondered what was done with all the weaving the machine could do. She assured me with her thought that it was only running because someone had turned it on and did not know how to shut it off, and that it always ran so. But I did not pay much attention, being very glad to see her face again. Her mind probed mine and slowly I unfolded before her the tale of my days from the time I had first come to this city and been taken in her care. Sadly she summed up all the days and sadly smiled upon me as I explained what had happened under the city by the lakes' jointure. She wept a little for she knew who they were that had died that night. I asked her about the girl from the art class, and learned it was indeed as I had suspected. She had been a cavern girl who had come to live on the surface.

"And now you know it is possible to come to us," she said.

"And I want to come to you!" I exclaimed.

"So you shall. No longer is it safe for you on the surface," she said. *"Go to Chesapeake Bay, for there is a man of the underworld who is very interested in artists, for he paints pictures himself with the clouds. With the vast ancient rays he paints great scroll pictures upon the cloud, and you will recognize him from that, for his cloud painting is very wonderful. I will send him a vine-talk message that you are coming, he will care for you and in time you will know what to do. I will set a mark upon you, and any of the helpers on your way will help you along and make the way pleasant."*

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE next day I set out for Chesapeake Bay to find a man who painted in the sky with clouds.

The Maryland roads lay hot under the July sun, and I plodded on toward that place she had pictured for me. The time dragged on.

It was not far from Annapolis that a great ray beam touched me gently and a deep voice said: *"Are you the man?"*

I sat down in the grass by the side of the road, and answered wearily, "I am the man who knows."

"Stay here. I will get you a job and help you to live pleasantly."

One by one the maidens who served the man of the deep voice bent over me from afar, looking down on the screens of the ancient ray-mech, touching me with their fingers; and the delicious thrills of the stim came to me in

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floods. I knew I would not leave there for a long time.

The house the ray led me to was close to the island-dotted bay, lively with boats, and the boats lively with laughing youngsters. By contrast I felt now quite adult and grown up.

Within the house was a large and weather beaten fisherman, red faced and horny handed, who shook my hands and offered me a bottle of beer.

So it was that I found myself installed in a little cottage with an old salt who worked for the fisherman, eating fried crabs and good bread and butter, a soft stim ray making the world vastly more pleasant than God ever built it to be, and with a good bed waiting for me in the next room.

In the morning we threw some gear into a thirty foot boat and went out to "scrape poles."

Which was all very well, except that when I got out the long poles and fastened on the scrapers, the six-foot sea kept tossing me overboard. The water was fun, and warm, but at the same time it was disconcerting to shoot up and down along the pole six-foot at a time in an alternating elevator that was loose in the gears.

The fisherman found me a willing workman, and my knowledge of rigging and ropes made me handy and liked about the work. On the way home at night the unseen people played ben rays upon the bow wave so that it looked like frothing beer, champagne, or just the clean foam around a mermaid's flashing fins. Or they talked to me of my past, and of their own past, and of when the secrecy would end and they would have the wide upper world to play in, and were delightful companions for one who had so short a time ago been a fleeing, terror-stricken mite upon the dusty face of an earth turned suddenly hostile. After supper, lying on the long grass resting and looking up at the cooling sky and the gathering clouds above the sinking sun, the long master mech rays would reach out and the ray-painter would evolve from the clouds delicious and powerful pictures in somewhat the way an organ evolves music when played by a master of improvization. And my mind would quietly discuss the old masters and their methods of design with the master of cloud painting, and the clouds would absently take on the fulsome rounds of Rubens females in a bachanal scene as we discussed his wonder-brush and his color; or the clouds would assume the attitudes of despair and mystic folly of belief shown in El Greco's canvasses; or the patterns would evolve into soft and lovely Chinese water colors as we talked of the ancient Chinese masters; or the sad and lovely face of the Madonna of the rocks would look down as we spoke of Leonardo.

But the mighty enthusiasm the master displayed when we spoke of the Sistine chapel and the power of Michelangelo was

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breathtaking. His mind whipped the clouds into a fury of mighty limbs and majestic female beauty, of Herculean forms of males building a world, and when I asked why so much interest in Michelangelo in particular, he answered he was the only painter who had seemed to inherit the genius of the great artists of the Elder race who had decorated the caverns in which he lived.

"Who lived?" I asked.

"I live in such caverns, painted with vast forms that would take Michelangelo's breath away. They are not your imagination stealing away your perception of what is and what is not, as you so often suspect, but they are true, and a mighty ancient mystery wasted on blind men. Modern!" The painter spoke the word with vast scorn. "They think they are something because they have a 'modern' education. Where do they think such masters as Leonardo and Michelangelo got their training? From men of the caverns showing them the old work of the Elder race over the rays in the night—just as you have been shown—and failed to understand fully just as you have failed.

"I think the blindest of all had been the one you call Dante and his Inferno tripe. Some wise one of the underworld showed him the history of the fall of the Elder race, when they fled the nova of our sun, and he translated the whole thing into a phantasmagoria of religion about such characters as the Devil and of Hell and paints it all with his own idea of it as an 'allegory' meaning that it exists, but does not exist, meaning I believe but it is only after death these things are true, and so added his bit of ignorance to the vast pile of fool's work that has kept the wisdom of the caverns from surface men and their clever hands and minds that would have built a wonder world upon the surface if they but had access to the underworld these last centuries since Dante.

"I hate people like Dante, thinking they mean well, yet executing with their bigoted ignorance such monstrous mistakes upon the world of men. The reverberations of Dante's mistake has tainted every contact of the underworld minds with the educated men of the surface; they are always sure we are either spirits from hell or angels from heaven and never understand we are just men like themselves who have been raised under vastly different conditions and struggling with different obstacles than they are themselves. It is all very discouraging."

I agreed with the fisherman that the whole series of dreams and voices I had heard back and back into my childhood was a real thing and a contact with the underworld in truth and not a kind of supersensitive madness.

For nothing was harder to hold to than this same conviction that the world from which the voices came was what teachers and psy-

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chiatrists and other "learned" people have so long explained it to be. I thought of the voices people heard in Medieval times and of Dante's dream of the underworld and its many repetitions in Dante's life and in other lives; so many thousands of people back into time all having the same illusions and the same voices saying the same things. It is hard to accept that all those men are suffering from illusions and myself from another, when the voice is intelligent and responds so perfectly and explains all miracles so easily as due to mechanisms built long ago by a superior race, out of imperishable metals. It was all hard to figure out, but so many such things of the past like Dante's dreams told me there was vastly more to such experiences than a disordered mind. However disordered the mind it could hardly repeat so closely the disorders of others, and while one knows there is no God, it is hard to condemn all men who say they have seen angels and heard angelic voices as mad, or as mad everyone who believed in God.

I spoke my mind to the old cloud-artist:

"If I stay up here and talk as you are teaching me to talk, I will get myself in trouble with those who hold that such things are madness and only madness. But if I go down there and see for myself what is true and what it all looks like and what kind of people you are who have managed to live in what would seem to be eternal darkness for so many long centuries, then I could return and tell men about this thing properly."

"What you ask is reasonable. I have often thought that such a man might turn the old ways of secrecy into another kind of habit. So, while everything is favorable, and when the watchers are off duty, I think you might be conveyed down there for a time and know for a fact what is and what is not illusion in your past contact with the underworld."

I had grown used to accepting my contact with the voices as something peculiarly my own, something I could tell no one through their inability to understand and their usual reaction of looking at me as a little mad—or more than a little. I had closed my mind through the years to the vast implications inherent in the existence of the voices, had ceased to make the deductions the mind naturally leaps to from the discovery that "voices" and dreams do not have their source in the mind, but from outside the mind from other people with powers and apparatus and a life totally different from the people one sees around one daily. I had deduced that they lived underground in vast caverns, but I knew that others with similar experiences had deduced the "voices" were spirits, or were people "on another plane of life" etc. From my reading I had gotten all these various slants on these

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ESP sensings, and had stuck to my original information from my little friend of the darkness, that she belonged to "the secret people who live in the deep caves of the Elder race."

Now, putting an end to these years of speculation and casual acceptance of the "voices" as either madness, peculiar imagination, or sensing of things denied to less fortunate minds, putting an end to all my false trails of thought about the friends who had protected me from the unseen dangers such as Max, my personal nemesis, putting an end to all my half-decided-upon attempts to find and somehow reward these unseen friends who protected and helped me with their rays, came this casual invitation to join them in their "secret" abode. Joyfully I leaped to my feet saying: "I will come, and you show me the way. Very readily I will come! I want to go with you—now."

The fisherman did not stop to consider, to vacillate or evade, but said: "Tonight, in the darkness, one will come for you. If you fail to follow, if you shake with fright and are unable to move for fear, as some others I have so invited, there will be no second chance; for we are sick to death of surface people who think superstitiously of us and fear us. We are only men like yourself, though our ways are different. You will see for yourself if you follow without doubt or mistrust."

CHAPTER EIGHT

THAT evening dragged by with leaden feet. The sun sank behind the wooded islets with all its Maryland glory, and the painter of the clouds amused my waiting with many transformings of the clouds into mighty scenes of war: great horses swept across the sky with riders in armor and strange weapons in their hands. The sea that was only Chesapeake Bay heaved with new beauty against the sandy beach; the cedars moaned in the soft wind, and darkness came again. But it was different this night. The darkness was pregnant with promise of an unveiling of the mysteries of my life, and every shadow in the woods outside the door of the shack where I sat waiting was the messenger of the underworld.

The moon came up at last, and sleep tried to seal my eyelids against the silver mist of its light. My body was tired, but my mind was leaping at the barriers of time and space, conjecturing the mighty glories of life on the world when the Elder race was the only race, and their mighty bodies leaped across the primeval chasms and strode through the first forests of earth. When the mysteries of their science were not mysteries but were a mighty living understanding of the nature of energy and matter, and the great hands of the Elder race molded all earth and life-being into the

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shapes that pleased it most. As I mused thus, through the silver and black of the night forest around me came a form as light in its step as the sea foam that drifted up and touched the beach with its motile wave-formed beauty, so did Nydia drift up through the darkness and touch at last my waiting, awe-frozen body. At her touch the wonder that had come to me at last, the truth that was exposed to me at last, the seeking that had at last borne fruit, all combined to send a vast thrill, the thrill of the waiting unknown leaping through my veins with the surging of youth given-the-way-to-youth's natural reward.

She was quite young, looking not more than nineteen, and over her shoulder, toga-fashion hung a silken glory of irridescence, and through that miraculous fabric the young forms of her body peered at me with all the shy invitation of first love meeting a mate.

"Come, my Richard. We have a place for you in the mansions of the forgotten places."

She turned and started off through the silver-barred shadows, and my feet were not reluctant but frantic with my fear she would disappear before my eyes. Close, almost touching her fair undulant form, I followed, my feet clumsy behind her glistening gold-shod feet, and came to the narrow shelving beach. There in the shadows waited a boat that looked like other boats, but was *not* in any way.

She stepped into the wide, canoe-shaped boat, and I entered carefully, but it did not tip or waver under my weight. She sat in the bow, facing forward into the dark, and I took the mid seat. She pulled a little lever in the thwart. Silently the boat slid forward into the quiet night; swiftly it hastened on and on. Carefully she avoided any nearness to other craft that occasionally passed.

Some twenty miles we travelled, by my guess, when Nydia steered the strange craft directly toward a high dark bank against which the low waves beat. As we approached I saw a wide door hanging outward into the water. The boat glided into the opening. As we entered, the door swung shut behind us, and Nydia switched on a light on the bow of the boat. She stopped then, beside a cut stone shelf along the water, got out and walked back to the door. I gathered she was locking it against chance discovery. She came back and got in, and again the boat travelled on through the water for a mile or more, when she again stopped. Together we pulled the boat, which was strangely light, up on the shelf and there she secured it by a rusty chain with a knot. It seemed strange to me to see a thing as wonderful as that silent gleaming craft chained up with a rusty old chain against some chance rise of the water or the tide there in the water cave, but

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I kept silent as did she. Now the way led away from the water into a dark opening. Nydia carried a small light in her hand and I was astonished to see that it was a lantern of an antique kind that she had picked from a niche in the wall where stood several. For a long time she walked beside me, and now and again her hip touched mine, and through me shot that thrill of woman's touch which I knew could only be so strong if it was intensified by the mysterious "stim"; thus I knew we were watched all the way by a ray. Because of that realization, I understood why my limbs leaped with strength, why my pulse pounded through me with an anticipation of glory ahead, and why no hint of weariness crept into my limbs from the long walking.

My mind conjectured the nature of that ancient science, that it must of necessity be a development of the knowledge of the nature of physical electric, and that they must have rays which were synthetic manufacture of electrics similar to those made by the human body, and that perhaps they had thus made all the vibrants of the nerves and body successfully, so that any sensation the body can feel could be made by them synthetically from energies similar to electric. Thus I understood stim-pleasures and their love-nature, and I understood dreams and their vivid reproduction of all possible sensations and some not possible.

Still the graceful young form walked undulant beside me, and I could not keep my eyes from the glory of her face that was so much more white in the dim yellow light of the old lantern than it should be. I knew that that face had not been under the strong outer sun in all its young life. The pale gold of her hair, that hung in long pale gleaming curves and ringlets, fascinated because of its soft silken nature. The soft quiet step and utter confidence of her bearing was something to impress the most unobservant.

So presently we came to a round cylinder that stood in the center of a wide place in the round tunnel we were following. Nydia went up to the cylinder, and at her touch a door opened and we stepped in. And as the door closed, the round into which we had stepped shot downward. My heart went upward with the thrill of speed, and Nydia smiled at me, feeling the thrill of the motion too.

At last the car stopped, the door swung open, and I knew that those who had built that car had been much greater in size than men as I knew them, for the door was vastly too big. The handles of the controls were at the height of the girl's head, and she was near as tall as myself.

Into a vast chamber we stepped through ancient doors that timeless magic had made so long ago, graving them with symbols

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of a meaning that rang still, vaguely familiar and with a strange awe in the curving grotesqueries that were weird animals and serpents and vining trees and symbols of a forgotten tongue all in one.

Those maidens I had known in dreams but had never quite believed truly existed then met us:

. . . Where the rough winds never blow
Unvisited by rain or snow,
Veiled in a volant ether, ample, clear,
Swept by the silver light's perpetual flow,
Wherein the happy Gods . . . quaff pleasure . . .

I thought of Homer and realized from the words that Homer must have known much more of the Gods and their underworld than he ever managed to tell, or telling, was misunderstood.

These were the kind of girls I had dreamed of, and never made the dreams quite solid to my inner eyes for fear they could not be in the sane mind with logic.

Now, reading all of their minds at once from the magnetic conductive flooding the chamber and making all thoughts loud and audible each to the other I knew these maidens were waiting for me with a welcome such as only can exist in Fairyland.

On my eyes the little bells that are the ancient fairy magic rang and rang, the eyelids slipped to close, and soft thoughts told me that dreaming time had come at last, was here. I was their own sweet property now to do with as they willed and off in the many-chambered dim-green gloom that was the ancient palace of a God I heard the soft laughter of love endlessly echoing, and whether it was only echoes or a myriad of people all in love and knowing each the other's mind and body wholly I could not guess, but only knew that at last my own tired and forgetting inward mind had found its way home. All my so-called "sub-conscious" inward life that they knew and I did not, was opened now to my inward eyes by the conductive pleasure rays they played upon me. I knew now *myself*, and it is a wonderful experience to realize all the inward memories and subtle knowings of the whole past mind.

Hard upon and mingled with all these sweet sounds and sights that were her maiden comrades at their wonder-work, came the soft sweet emphasis of Nydia's voice, the girl who had brought me here, chanting magic words of erotic meaning and laughing between the sounding words, that husky, arousing sound of come-hither that only women can voice who have the art of love and life ingrained, a practiced part of their soul from childhood teaching, the meaning that intends openly and purpose-

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ly to enchant one man forever in a spell of love.

I reached with my mind for her, and she did not hide or evade my seeking, but laid all the interior of herself, that warm soft woman-self of her mind, open to my mental gaze, and I bathed my inward eyes in that unearthly dew of Mother Mu's own brewing, that magic that is woman and home to a man's heart and I felt warm and assured.

All the secrets of the telaug and the stim rays were hers, and all the little mind fingers of the subtle rays sought and found the springs of my passions and laid me unresistant and open to the pleasure taking of her senses. Such mind-love and frank openness and knowing each the other that is only possible with the magic of the ancient telaug rays was ours. From that day on together, so it was with us.

CHAPTER NINE

ON A LOUNGE we reclined before a great stim-mech, arm in arm, and one by one the company that inhabited this forgotten land of magic beneath prosaic Annapolis came and greeted me and said they knew me and gave me their names and some laughing word of the life they led.

There was nothing for us to do but wait . . . there were times when we could have made it but it is not the custom and there were always certain old crabs to consider . . . they told me.

I knew they were speaking of the other times when I might have joined them and for some reason not clear to me it was not possible.

"Lack for nothing, and leave the worry to us. Later, when you know more about our life, you will have a turn at the worries that burden us.

"Dream awhile and grow strong, and leave the fretting till you are well as we are well . . .

"There are fears by the score, but do not have them, later . . ."

Somehow we were wed in a strange phantasmagoria of clever words and resounding meanings that was their ceremony—and why it was here and now to be wed I did not understand except that there is no living in such an atmosphere without love, and there is no way to unlock the chains that do bind love there under the stim-mech, and they were doing what was best for me.

Her red mouth met mine, for she had chosen me, and knew I could not resist the impulses of the rays, not the mental magic of the rays which leave no room for the evasion and choosing that is surface man's concept of love—she had chosen and that was all there was to that. My dreams became, with the meeting with her electrified, titanically stimulating mouth, a bright glory filling the whole sky of my mind.

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All the time the soft laughter that was like an echo resounded in the far dim corridors and I could understand nor guess about it.

Much later the pools were filled with water that was alive to the touch and caressing with the vital electric.

Dimly in the back of her mind I heard a myriad strange thoughts like this . . .

The green palls of smoke that the evil de-mech emanates and the horde of the underpits . . . The gray land, the bright water stopped and damned up and turned to ink . . .

The afternoon dead of despair . . . Drowning, and all those little wounds we may not have and live; those wounds that are not much to look at but are so painful. Always there are two, the pale and the dead: the creep, she may not eat for lack of money, and the wits to get that money; the dead that may laugh now after so long sorrow. The thin, thin children hunting, always hunting for food . . . good, good food.

Not today may they have it, but tomorrow, always tomorrow till they are dead of waiting.

Not alone are we in our efforts. There is the zoogyte Mother Mi herself, the virgin who has many sons, for all men are her sons by induction of her magnetic flows of meaning that men think are their own thoughts. She half dis-owns them, but they are hers. There are also the sun's children, the many Hitlers of errant evil whom she abhors, yet supports.

Hard are her ways, for she has become old with sorrow and the disillusion that comes her way too often. There is her ancient love and its strength remains in her dreams, but the will of her love remains too much a dream these days . . .

I asked her why these thoughts were there in her mind and why I could not understand.

"They are my memories and my knowing of the strange life of the far wild caverns and the weird and evil life in it. One day you will understand such thought. Until then, be happy as you can, for our marriage moon will end all too soon and we must then go out to hold the barricades against the realities that are the source of such thoughts in me. We need you, Dick Shaver, we need you, and that is why we welcome you as we do, and why I marry you now, for men not used to our battles are usually first to die at the lines.

She was marrying me because I was soon to die unless I was unnaturally lucky!

But obedient I put away the thoughts of what might lie ahead and became only pleasure in her arms, and the dreams that are the ancient records of a life that was superior ecstasy in its most dull moments to anything we have in life poured over us in the marriage that was the underworld's welcome to another man.

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Yet, echoing about the inner corridors of her mind I clearly heard always those put aside thoughts . . .

It is the time of the mother Earth's subsidence, the days of her sleeping, and she who may not be old yet feels old and unwanted among her weak moderns who do not know she exists with their weak thought-hearing that only works in dreams in the night. The days do not reward her for her work, but only bring more of sorrow and weight to the endless time, and more of grief for the old times of power and vital strong laughter and the leaping feet that are no more. Oh, for the time of the Titans again.

Again I asked my new mate: "What are these thoughts I keep hearing of the '*mother*'? Who is she?"

"That is the Earth's hidden mind, that exists in the magnetic fields around all the matter particles that are the Earth. She is alive in her way, and those are her thoughts as I have read them with great telaug rays sent deep into the earth-center. I keep pondering her thoughts, looking for ways to be more alive and to succeed in our struggle for freedom for the underworld. That is why you read them in my mind. That is their meaning."

Surely no man ever had to adjust to stranger existence than one in which such thoughts and words are to be heard as facts —everyday facts.

So I write this tale of dreams and madness, or of sober truth and strange and ancient wisdom, according as you know or do not know this world, or are sure there are not things to learn beyond your present knowledge. For those latter I would advise nothing, but for the others I can say this: there is a vaster truth to learn than any I can tell you about the Earth and her peoples and her secrets, and only careful seeking and a wise and understanding and accepting mind that does not refuse anything that might be true until it knows a better truth to replace it, will find it. So seek and there is a mighty place and a mighty and bigger life to find than this one we call all. For not all dreams are "escapist's madness"; there are dreams that have a purpose and a source in other minds of an experience denied us.

I know, for I have found it—and lost it. For I alone, by that freak of an unkind fate that cannot be understood, escaped the death that should have been first for me. Nydia is dead, and all her people, and all the fair maidens of love. I lived, and found my way back to the surface—and now I cannot return. All those who knew me are dead, and the others keep the secret—as they have always done.

THE END

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THE FACTS BEHIND THE MYSTERY

By RAYMOND A. PALMER

No one but Ray Palmer could have written this background. No one else has sufficient knowledge of the events, incidents, and growth-mechanics that brought The Shaver Mystery into being. This in itself is a fascinating story. We regret that space limitations cut Ray's wordage to a minimum. So far as this editor is concerned, here is a case of the birth being more interesting than the child.

I WAS editor of all the Ziff-Davis fiction magazines, including *AMAZING STORIES* and *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES*, from February, 1938 to September 1949. In September 1944 a letter came to the desk of Howard Browne, my managing editor, and was opened by him. He read it with his typical orthodox attitude and tossed it into the wastebasket with the comment: "The world is certainly full of crackpots!"

Even through the intervening wall I heard his remark, and the word "crackpot" drew me like a magnet. It might be said that this was the particular "talent" which was responsible for my editorship of *AMAZING STORIES*, and for my "free rein" in determining policy. In any event, I retrieved the letter from the wastebasket.

It gave the details of an "ancient alphabet" that "should not be lost to the world" according to its author, one Richard S. Shaver. I examined the alphabet, made a few casual experiments with a dictionary, then a few more than casual experiments. I went about the office to those who were familiar with other languages than English, and came up with rather interesting results. That was enough. I published that letter in *Amazing Stories*.

The results made publishing history, insofar as pulp magazines were concerned. Many hundreds of letters poured in, and the net result was a letter to Richard S. Shaver asking him where he got his Alphabet.

The answer was in the form of a 10,000 word manuscript, typed with what was certainly the ul-

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timate in non-ability at the typewriter, and entitled "A Warning To Future Man."

I read it through, every single word, and then sat back. What was it I had here? Certainly not an attempt by an "author" to sell a story. For Mr. Shaver wanted no money for his manuscript. It *wasn't* a manuscript, but a *letter*, and it *was* written as a warning. Mr. Shaver seemed anxious that it be published, not for notoriety, but out of a sincere (apparently) desire that the world be warned of the terrible danger it faced, and informed of a wonderful heritage it had lost, and which should be recovered if at all possible.

I was editor of a fiction magazine—a magazine devoted to stories of the future, which, based on present factual science, attempted to project that science into its possible future development and effect upon mankind. Here was an "idea" for such a story. True, it wasn't based on accredited science—to the contrary, it was absolutely in opposition to all the text-books which were a basic tool in my office. Also, it purported to be the science of the past, rather than of the future. Yet here was a "jumping off place" for some really terrific stories. I had, as always, the profit possibilities in mind, and pictured this story on the cover of *Amazing Stories*, with the proper dramatic captioning, as a sure-fire circulation getter.

I put a clean piece of paper into my typewriter, and using Mr. Shaver's strange letter-manuscript as a basis, I wrote a 31,000 word story which I entitled "I Remember Lemuria!" (complete with exclamation mark), and although I added all the "trimmings," I did not alter the "factual" basis of Mr. Shaver's manuscript except in one instance. Here, perhaps, I made a grave mistake. However, I could not bring myself to believe that Mr. Shaver had actually gotten his Alphabet, and his Warning To Future Man, and all the "science" he propounded, from actual caves in the earth, and actual people living there. Instead, I translated his thought-records into "racial memory," and felt sure this would be more believable by my readers, and after all, if this were all actually based on fact, a reasonable and perhaps *actual* explanation for what was going on in Mr. Shaver's mind—which is where I felt it really was going on, and not in any caves, nor via any telaug rays, or telesolidograph projections of illusions from the cavern ray operators.

I published "I Remember Lemuria!" in the March, 1945 issue. This, if you will recall, was during the war, and during a critical paper shortage. Sales were already 98%, and could not possibly go higher, and I felt that here, with a certain circulation-getter, it was tragic that I could not secure unlimited paper, because I felt that we could sell

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many more copies. Accordingly, I informed Mr. Shaver of the coming publication of his "story," and enclosed a check for 1¢ per word for his original manuscript. I also expressed my regret that we could not publish more copies, due to the paper situation.

To my amazement, and I'll admit, amusement, I received a letter asking for the name of the production manager, since Mr. Shaver felt that something could be done to secure paper for additional copies from some source, if an effort were made. I supplied the name, realizing that nothing could be done, and asked rather condescendingly just how Mr. Shaver proposed to accomplish this miracle—because I felt it would be the height of ineffectuality for Mr. Shaver to write personally to Mr. Strong, the circulation director, especially (although I didn't express this to Mr. Shaver) when the letter would seem the work of a callow youth with a toy typewriter with several keys missing.

"Oh no," said Mr. Shaver in a reply, "I will ask the cave people to help."

"How?" I asked in an instant return letter.

Well, it seemed it was this way: Mr. Shaver, who knew that "ray operators" were constantly on duty, observing surface people, could gain the attention of some such operator by making an uproar (throwing his shoes repeatedly on the floor, and in general making an unusual sort of ruckus before going to bed) which would draw a focus of attention, and then, having gained this attention, he would make his request aloud, giving all the details available. So, he had asked the cavern people to impress upon the mind of Mr. Strong the vital necessity of procuring more paper for this March issue of *Amazing Stories*.

How I laughed. Even Howard Browne laughed, although he deemed it evidence, even to me, that I was dealing with a complete "nut." Until Mr. Strong called me into his office and related how he had been struck with a "brilliant hunch" about the March issue of *Amazing Stories*, and was going to "steal" enough paper from *Mammoth Detective*, which was also selling 98% and therefore, by all the rules of common sense, should not have been thus handicapped and 50,000 of its readers thereby deprived of their usual monthly copy.

And there it was. The first of a long string of fantastic occurrences that always accompanied the Shaver Mystery, as it was later to be termed. I shall never forget Mr. Strong's absolutely crazy hunch. For such mismanagement, he could have been fired outright—for it was gross mismanagement. What if, even in this period of paper shortages, and thus shortages of magazines on the stands, *Amazing Stories* had sold its *usual* 135,000 copies, and the *additional* 50,000 had been returned as "junk"?

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Then came the second big surprise. The 50,000 copies sold, almost over night. And more incredible, a flood of letters began to come in that totaled, in the end, more than 50,000 letters. Our usual letter-response was some 45 or 50 letters per month.

Soon it came to the attention of Mr. Davis that we had "upped" the distribution of *Amazing Stories*, and also, that our story in that issue was being billed as "true." Both Mr. Strong and myself were called on the carpet (and Mr. Browne was included). Said Mr. Davis, in no uncertain terms: "These are *my* magazines. You are ruining them. I won't stand for it. On what basis do you increase the distribution by 50,000?"

Mr. Strong passed the buck. "Mr. Palmer informed me he had a terrific story, which he felt sure would sell like hot cakes."

Mr. Davis: "I've read the story; I took it home last night and read it through. I have never read such balderdash in my life. Not only will you not sell the extra 50,000, you will not sell 50% of our original customers!"

Having successfully diverted the lightning in my direction, Mr. Strong picked up the phone and asked for sales figures from the distributor. In the hush that followed, I mentally made plans for an extended fishing trip in Northern Wisconsin, and a return to free-lance writing. Then came the information, and all of us could see Mr. Strong's face growing red, his eyes almost popping out of his head. "A sellout —A flood of reorders—Heavens no, we can't get any more pap—" He gasped and sat down.

I left Mr. Davis' office with quite another viewpoint than the financial one, although I believe I was the only one to hold it: the question in my mind was not the howling sales success that the story was, but was it gospel truth after all? For, in my office were thousands of letters all saying the same thing: it *was* true. Thousands of people relating identical experiences, identical voices telling them identical things. And this was true, because in those letters were detailed recounts of what the voices had said to people who could not possibly have been associated with Shaver in any hoax, who told exactly the same story as Shaver had told me in hundreds of letters it was his habit then (and for years afterward) to write me daily giving me all the information about the caves he could transmit, so that it "should not be lost."

I went to Pennsylvania to visit Mr. Shaver.

I won't bother you with details; I will merely brief the fantastic things that happened to me:

I arrived near midnight, and for two hours, chatted with Richard and Dorothy, his wife. Speaking of the caverns as though they were real, and everybody knew about them, was a novel experience, and quite an

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eerie one; and obviously Mr. Shaver was assuming that I was one of those who "knew," and thus he could speak openly. I did nothing to dissuade him from this assumption, and when I finally was shown where I was to sleep, I was sure of one thing at least—Mr. Shaver was not consciously perpetrating a hoax.

Safely in bed, I heard Mr. Shaver go to his own room to retire, while Dorothy remained downstairs cleaning up after our "coffee session" and feeding a variety of cats and dogs, for perhaps an hour. Mr. Shaver, however, apparently went to sleep the moment he hit the sheets. And within a few moments, I began to hear voices. No, they weren't in my mind, nor in the air about me—they were from Mr. Shaver's lips, and no doubt about it.

I heard five voices: A woman's voice; a child's voice; a gruff man's voice; and two other male voices, of varying pitch and timbre. What they said startled me beyond all imagination. Briefly, that afternoon, these five "persons" had witnessed a woman being torn into four quarters about four miles away and four miles down (from the Shaver house). They remarked on how "horrible" it had been; that such things "should not be"—and how heartily I agreed! I sat up in bed and answered the voices.

"What's this all about?" I asked. "Let me in on the secret!"

Instantly there was a change in the voices.

"Pay no attention to him," said the childish voice. "He's a dope!"

And the voices switched to a strange language, one I could not identify as any I had ever heard before. And in the bedlam that followed, sometimes *all five of the voices were speaking at once,* excitedly and volubly. If you have been thinking, as you read this, that it was Mr. Shaver "imitating voices," indulging in an "act of ventriloquism," or any such explanation, you are dead wrong. What I heard could not have come from Mr. Shaver's lips—it was humanly impossible!

When Dorothy Shaver came up to bed, the voices ceased as though switched off. And I, as I lay there in deep thought, determined I'd leave no board unpried in my effort to find a recording machine, wires, microphones, etc.

Next day, while sometimes left alone in the house while chores were performed, I did exactly that. And if it was a trick of this kind, I was not clever enough to uncover it.

Asking how I had slept, Mr. Shaver detected that I hadn't, and although he made little comment, I wondered what he would explain. He assumed I *knew* and beyond apologizing, didn't say anything further.

The next night I was ready for another interesting session with the voices, and to my vexation, I fell into a dreamless sleep the instant my head hit the pillow, and slept twelve hours without

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even moving (and this is *not* my habit, as I am a light sleeper and a wild "tosser"). I knew I hadn't moved, because is was not even necessary to make the bed—it was that undisturbed.

Mr. Shaver asked me again how I had slept, and when I informed him "like a log," he grinned and said he'd thought I would, because he'd asked them to "lay off" while I was here. "You know," he confided, "they think you're pretty much of a dope," and he added hastily ". . . but that's because they don't know you well enough to realize you're one of the insiders . . ."

I could have wept right then, because apparently he'd closed the door I wanted so much to keep open.

I came back to Chicago determined to run the Shaver Mystery out to its final conclusion. The result was four years of Shaver Stories which kept the circulation of *Amazing Stories* at its equally amazing 185,000 circulation, until the Shaver Mystery was dropped (because it contradicted Einstein, some irate reader wrote), when it promptly dropped back to 135,000.

Richard S. Shaver began writing his now famous stories in 1944 and has created a permanent addition to both "science fiction" and "occult" lore and he has a host of backers in both fields, although he himself does not subscribe to the existence of the mystic world described by believers in spirits. His is a mechanistic universe in which immortality is the scientific knowledge of how to live forever. He believes the earth was abandoned by the "immortal" race, the Titans (and Atlans), who now live in the darkness of outer space.

Briefly what Mr. Shaver says is this: The Earth is inhabited, underground, in gigantic caves whose area is a great deal more than the surface land area, by a race of people called by him "abandondero," or descendents of an "abandoned" group of people who were unable to leave the planet some 12,000 (or more) years ago in a general exodus made necessary by the discovery that the sun had commenced to hurl death-dealing radiations over the entire planet, and indeed, the entire solar system. These radiations were radioactive, and lodged in the body, being taken in largely through drinking water which accumulated the radioactive particles, and breathed into the lungs with the dust of the air which was also contaminated, and to a lesser degree, from the sunlight itself. The answer, thought the race then living on the earth (named variously "Titans" and "Atlans"), was to flee the planet, and migrate to one near an uncontaminated sun, or a planet in "dark space" near no sun at all.

This decision came after a fruitless attempt to escape the deadly radiations by moving from the surface of the earth, into the interior in great caverns hollowed out artificially, or mod-

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ified from huge already existing natural caverns.

Up to this time the Atlans and Titans lived virtually forever, at least for thousands of years; but now, with the radioactivity in their bones, they suffered radioactive poisoning which they claimed was the cause of the disease known as "age." A modern example is the case of the factory where girls painted "radium dial" clocks with brushes they "tipped" with their tongues. These girls developed poisoning which in short months made them appear to be hideously old hags, with all the infirmities of advanced age.

Since there were not enough space ships nor enough time to evacuate the entire population, only favored groups escaped, and the less fortunate or already diseased were abandoned and came to be called the abandondero.

Because the sun also has health-giving rays, to which these people living in the caves had no access, they degenerated into midget-like idiots, incapable of any constructive reasoning. Shaver calls them "dero" for short, which is a contraction of the words "detrimental (or degenerate) robots." The word "ro" meant a sort of slavery, or compulsory government. To be "ro" was to be "governed by." Thus these idiot people were governed by degenerative forces and were "dero."

There are others, fewer in number, who, with the use of machines and chemicals and beneficial rays, manage to stave off much of the mental degenerative effect of their way of life, and although they cannot circumvent the disease of age, and die at an average age of 50, retain a higher mental calibre. These are known as "tero," "te" being "integrative" or constructive. T was also the symbol of the cross of religion; it was good. The tero were governed by the constructive forces.

However, down through the centuries the dero have become more numerous and the tero reduced by constant attack to a few scattered groups in hiding who are unable to do much to circumvent the deviltry of the dero. The dero have access to the wonderful machines of the ancients, still in working order, since they were built almost indestructible, and with these machines they are able to bedevil both the tero and surface people. Among these machines are marvelous vision rays that can penetrate miles of solid rock, picking up scenes all over the Earth without the need of a broadcast unit; transportation by teleportation instantaneously from one point to another (although this did require a sending and receiving set); mental machines which caused seemingly solid illusions, dreams, hypnotic compulsions (which account for the strange "urges to kill" of surface folk, such as the case of the young girl who said "God told me to stab mother with a knife").

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They have death rays, space ships, giant rockets that traverse the upper air, (the flying saucers were described in detail by Mr. Shaver before they actually appeared to Mr. Kenneth Arnold and to thousands since), ground vehicles of tremendous power, machines for the revitalizing of sex known as "stim" machines (in which these degenerates sometimes spend their whole lives in a sexual debauch that actually deforms their bodies in horrible ways almost beyond mentioning), ben rays which heal and restore the body, but are also capable of restoring lost energy after a debauch, and many more marvelous things which Mr. Shaver claims would revolutionize our surface science if we could but obtain them.

The surface people who now inhabit the earth are the descendents of those abandondero who were not even able to gain access to the "life-saving" caverns but were forced to roam the surface (producing the remains now known as Neanderthal). Most of them died off, but others developed a resistance to the sun's death-dealing rays, and eventually managed to live almost as long, on the average, as the cavern people; and today, slightly longer. They had one advantage, they did not go insane from lack of the beneficent rays of the sun as did the dero, and from the concentrated "de" of the machines which gradually became saturated with radioactive accumulations which perverted the otherwise health-giving rays they gave off.

However, surface folk have lost all memory of their forefathers except for vague legends of "Atlantis" and "Lemuria" and "giants"; while they know only of the dero as "devils" who torture them in their sleep, bring misfortune, and foster all the evil in men's minds.

Today, says Mr. Shaver, the dero still exists in the caves and all our troubles are caused by them. Our wars are fostered by them; our terrible air accidents are not always accidents at all, but the result of destructive rays aimed at them by idiots whose only delight is death and torture; even our nightmares are the result of their "dream mech" trained on us in our sleep.

In my research into the Shaver Mystery, I have talked with hundreds of people. I have been impressed with one thing—their sincerity. I have also been impressed with another thing—that Mr. Shaver, despite what his claims seem to indicate is *not* mentally unbalanced. He is a grave, slow-spoken, calm, unassuming man, with a continual glint of good humor in his eyes. Yet, there is the impression of a hard life lived adventurously, and of courage. It certainly takes courage to say the things he does, knowing full well that they will be deemed insane by the majority. However, I will not judge the man's mind, because I am incapable of it—except to say that he is

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one of the most brilliant I have ever met. And he plays a marvelous game of chess . . .

Says Mr. Shaver: "I have been in the caves."

"Physically?" I asked him.

"I *believe* so," he told me in Pennsylvania, "but just when and how I cannot say. How can one divide the 'dream' from the 'reality' when there is no way of determining which is which? I've tried the old trick of pinching myself. It always hurt.

"Let us put it this way: Are you *really* here, talking to me?"

"Yes," I said positively.

"Then I have been in the caves!" he said just as positively.

Mr. Shaver's stories are accepted as legitimate evidence of the precepts of the followers of occultism. This is amazing, in that Mr. Shaver positively does not adhere to any belief in a life after death, looks pityingly upon those who believe that the voices he hears and the dero and tero he sees are "spirits." He tells you the blood of a tero spurts as stickily and redly when he is drawn and quartered as would yours. The existence of "spirits" is "wool" deliberately fostered by the cave people to explain the things they do, and prevent investigation, which surface people would otherwise make if there were not a scapegoat on which to blame the mysterious happenings.

But the occultists say Shaver's caves are really the lower astral, the abode of the dead who are spiritually degraded. The Spiritists declare that their seances reveal the existence of these degenerate little people exactly as Shaver describes them, but existing in a strange world of other-vibratory nature right along with ours. The tero, they say, are the spirits of the good, of guardian angels, of higher spirits who guard over mankind.

Says Shaver: "If so, I am amazed at their impotence! It looks as if the Devil has God on the run. If I am a mystic, a 'sensitive,' a 'medium,' then I have seen 'guardian angels' boiled in oil, fried on a spit, and *eaten!* In the caves, one of the greatest delicacies of the dero is *human flesh*, and I have seen where that flesh comes from! Surface people, just like you and I. I can't imagine a 'spirit' eating 'lamb' stew."

On December 27, 1949, Albert Einstein came out with a new theory of gravitation and electromagnetic fields. Months before that, Mr. Shaver (minus the mathematical formula) told me the same thing! For the record, I want to say that if any credit for a new and revolutionary theory of gravity goes to *anybody* it should go to Richard S. Shaver, on the basis of prior publication (in *Amazing Stories*).

Whatever else he is, he is of a scientific turn of mind, and his stories contain dozens of scientific precepts of great magnitude which have been and are being confirmed by scientific research *since* Shaver described them.

Lastly, many times I have been slyly accused of being Mr. Shaver

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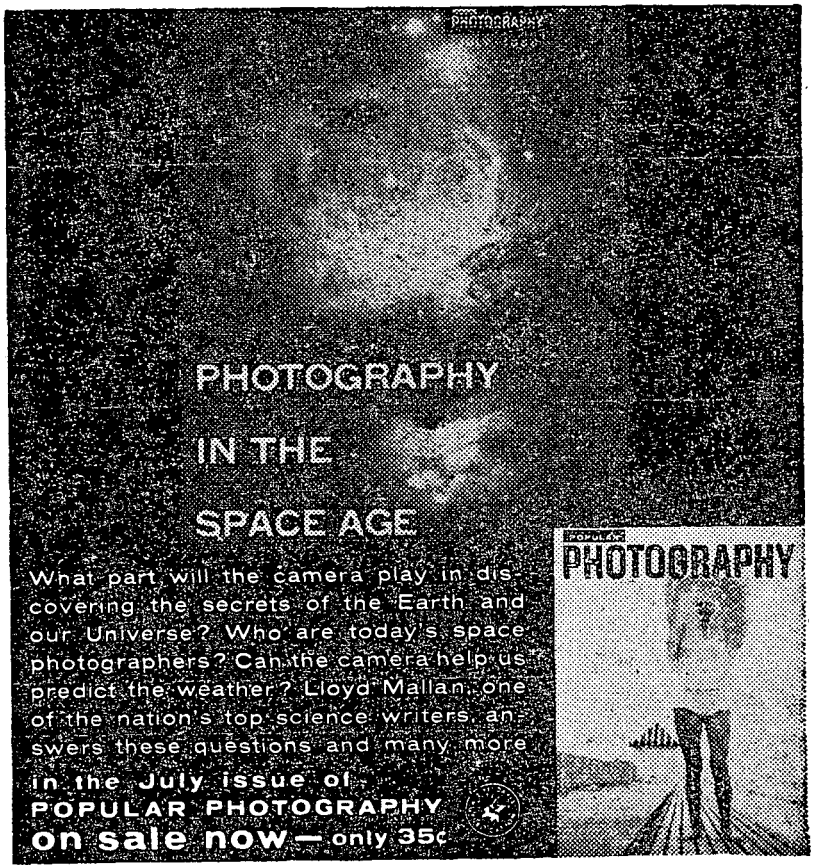
myself, and that no such person as Shaver exists. While it is true that a great deal of the actual writing of the stories published under Mr. Shaver's name have been *rewritten* by me, it has been in an editorial and revisional capacity, and although the words are different, the facts of the Shaver Mystery are the same and remain original with him. He *does* exist.

Today I have in my possession a vast array of material, hardly even classified, which Mr. Shaver has passed on to me. Someday it should be published, and perhaps it will be soon. In this article, a beginning is made. In it I have little of a personal nature to say.

Except that I give you Richard S. Shaver and the greatest adventure of modern times, in my humble opinion.

THE END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The Shaver Mystery— A DEFENSE

By RICHARD S. SHAVER

No one should be in a better position to defend the Shaver Mystery than its originator—Richard S. Shaver. Perhaps this admittedly brilliant personality will not win you over to his way of thinking, but we do feel his sincerity is self-apparent in this article.

RAY PALMER came to me the other day, as he has several times before, to ask me to write a short article on the Mystery. He emphasized short because when he mentioned length before, I just didn't get it done.

So you want the truth about the Shaver Mystery? From Shaver? Aren't you being naive?

Such a question is asked by people who don't know anything about the Shaver Mystery; and to answer it you have to explain the Mystery from A to Z—something like putting the Grand Canyon in your vest pocket.

I am somewhat weary of such questions after fourteen years of answering them with negative results. First, they ask: "Are there *really* caverns under the earth with people living in them?" This one I've been asked so often I wince.

"Yes, there are such caverns." That is the true answer, the correct and only answer.

Then my average interrogator registers utter disbelief, and I wonder why on earth he bothered to come to see me if he'd already made up his mind about it all? Then he or she usually says: "But that's fantastic!"

The implication being that anything fantastic is *ipso facto*, necessarily and incontrovertibly untrue! Nothing fantastic is ever true; or is it?

Truth is always far more fantastic than fiction. It's not only more fantastic, it's more rare, harder to come by, and far more valuable when you do get hold of a little of the real thing.

If you don't believe that, ask any writer of history texts. He will tell you that history texts are but flimsy approximations, a

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great deal of plausible invention hung upon a very few known facts. For it has been far easier in the past to fill in the vast blank spaces of history with pleasant fiction than to outline the stark unpleasant truths they did know and leave the rest blank that represents the real knowledge of the past. Our histories are gossamer fabrications hung upon bone fragments, a skeleton in gossamer; and the really profound truth about that skeleton is that it would fall apart were the gossamer removed.

You want to know how I expect anyone to believe there are caverns under the earth in which people live? I neither expect you to believe me, or care whether you do. I am just wearily stating a fact because I am the stubborn type.

The next question my average interrogator usually springs on me is: "And do they really have rays that read your mind and make you feel good and make you do things and all the rest of it?" And then he or she smirks a little guiltily at being such a fool as to consider seriously even talking about such manifest impossibilities.

I answer wearily, stubbornly, hopelessly: "The fact is they not only have them, they use them every single day on some of you."

This part I can prove, and I proceed to show them letters from people who have suffered from the unseen rays, suffered from official disbelief when they tried to get relief from their unseen tormenters. Hundreds of such letters could be gathered by anyone who wanted to go to the bother of asking for them in a few letter columns. Apparently they prove nothing, for there are none so blind . . .

Yes, people are tormented and bedeviled all over the USA and the rest of the world by something unseen that they don't know how to stop or to escape. For their sakes I give them here my usual advice: take a long sea voyage, get off the boat on the other side of the world and don't come back. If they leave you alone, stay there. If they don't, try again. (I only wish I could afford the trip myself!)

The next most numerous question: "Why don't they contact us, come out in the open, for trade and such things?" "Why hide?"

I've answered that one innumerable times, too. "They hide because they are guilty. It is an old guilt, an old habit of hiding. They hide because they are taking things from your caverns and you wouldn't like it if you knew they were *your* caverns. (Does the thief who robs your home hide from observers? Do you doubt that he *would* hide, naturally?) They hide because they do not feel that we are the same as they, for the simple reason they owe allegiance to other masters, other lords, other places than our own. They keep the old secret because they always have, as much as because they want to

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keep it. They must! They must because they always have. It is a long answer, and an old problem.

It is really like asking Jack the Ripper why he doesn't come in out of the dark and be a good fellow. Or like asking a mountain lion why he doesn't come to bed. Or like asking a King cobra why he doesn't like little girls. It is a question that illustrates fully the vast misunderstanding and utter ignorance that confuses this whole subject. One of the most used expressions in conversations between the surface and the caverns is: "There are no words!" It really means so very much to say "There are no words." There *are* no words for utter ferocity, complete stupidity, deepest abjectness, blackest servility to evil. *There are no words* to make you understand!

Writing the "Truth About The Shaver Mystery" is very like that bit about the cobra and the girls. It's like writing a letter to Martians and expecting understanding acceptance and an understandable answer. The truth is alien and fantastic and ugly beyond all words. The truth is utterly unacceptable to you and all like you who believe in the triumph of right over might, of evil over greater evil, of good over bad, of truth and beauty always prevailing over ugliness and despair and the lies of the Devil and his subjects.

Alien and fantastic as is the truth, it is nevertheless true. The money we are spending on missiles to catch up with Sputnik production would far better be spent catching up on the underworld; but who expects to get that through any great mind in brass?

"And were you the first to write about Saucers?" they often ask.

I'm used to that question, too. If they had read Shaver from the beginning they would know I mentioned saucers when they were not yet flying saucers, repeatedly spoke of present day interplanetary travel and its reasons, why they came and why they hid from us. The Saucers are as much a part of the Mystery as the caverns. But I answer: "Yes, I guess. I may have been." After all, I don't read everything everyone else writes.

"And are the Saucers from Space?" they ask, shamefacedly, apologizing for even mentioning the word Saucer. "Who really takes *them* seriously?" they seem to be saying with their eyes.

Well, I'll tell you again. There are many kinds of saucers. Some are from space. Some are from our own caverns, and to us these are the most important ones. They are all busy freighting away into Space the fantastic, unbelievable gadgetry of the Elder caverns, things built and stored before the Flood by our own forebears. Scientific things of incalculable value—because we haven't got them, and they would make our lives worthwhile if we had them. They are taking these things away to ports in far off

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Space, to those ports where the highest prices prevail. One can only ask: "What do the vintners buy, one half so precious as the wine they sell?" (Omar said that, you know, but in verse.)

One day we will wake up and wish we had understood this traffic in our ancient relics that are more valuable than any other thing on Earth. But today it is hopeless even to speak of Saucers with understanding acceptance by our officialdom. (I always want to spell it officialdumb.) Hasn't the army made it clear on TV that the Pentagon is firmly against believing in such things? They just *must not* exist! (Do you remember the king who told the sea to stop rolling in?)

Nevertheless, army experts and official frowns notwithstanding, the Saucers make regular trips to our earth and are sometimes seen by whole cities of people (mass delusion, you know), and they take back with them things worth more than our whole modern technology; for they were the product of a hundred thousand years of development of a great people. Our modern science, you know, dates back only to Lavoisier. You may remember that Lavoisier was beheaded in the French Revolution. That was quite a while after the American revolution, and that was 1776, less than two hundred years ago. And already we are sure we know everything!

We *know* there are no Saucers, yet they were making their trips to Earth before Lavoisier was born. We *know* there are ***no caverns*** full of treasures and wonders such as the one in which Aladdin found his remote control device—I mean his lamp. We *know* Aladdin is only a fairy tale of no importance but to children, don't we?

Yes, the truth is always far more fantastic than any fiction ever invented, if only you *know* the truth. The facts of life on Earth are *in truth* utterly fantastic. Even Life itself is a kind of fantastic denial of the laws of probability. (I know that the laws of probability are like Edsel's market forecasts, quite worthless. Like the polls they take of TV audience reaction and such things, they are not what they are cracked up to be. Facts turn out quite the opposite, as often.)

If you see all life through the the witch's glass of wilful blindness to all things good and true and beautiful, then the truth about life on Earth is a dull and quite drab repetition of everyday things, of course. For instance, why do the words good and true and beautiful seem to be such cliches? One should just never use them, if one listened to the voice that forbids cliches then certainly not.

It is given the average man to go through life in a sort of game of blind man's buff, with all the good things hidden from him, and his eyes able only to accept the usual, the known, the ugly, the necessary, the workaday ev-

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eryday inhumanity of living as it is, somehow.

This is so for the same reason a calf grows into a steer and becomes beef stew, because of the mental equipment that is not there.

But, in the case of mankind, the mental equipment is partially, more or less and occasionally, quite present. So it is sad for some men to see what others are and apparently want to be, and yet be unable to communicate the fantastic truth to their fellows.

It is like the story of the blind people in the canyon who accepted their canyon as the world, all they knew. When a man with eyes came to them over the canyon walls, and spoke to them of the wonder of sight . . . they put out his eyes! They could not bear the thought of sight, so alien and terrible. That he said there was nevertheless a vast world outside their canyon, they did not even countenance, did not even *know* he said it. For they could not accept the unknown, the inconceivable fact of sight, the things of the eyes. "Horrible, put out his eyes, cure him of this madness!"

So it is always with truth! It is a fantastic apparition to meet unawares a truth whose boundaries happen to over-reach the boundaries of our knowledge. Most unacceptable are such truths, and proof itself becomes that much greater an insult and an outrage. I know, for I have spoken such truths and suffered such punishments, and now I too am blind in a way. For I can no longer say with firm knowledge that I have telepathic powers.

So I write to you, and call it fiction sometimes; and sometimes it is fiction and sometimes it is not, and who can say which is which? Only I can say, and a few thousand others like me who can never be heard only because no one will listen.

Nevertheless it is true that people on the other side of the mountain have eyes that see through mountains. These eyes are telepathic eyes, and they are also devices like telephones, but much older. Once these devices were used to see into the mind of every living thing on Earth, and the knowledge thus gained was once used by Man and his allies to knit all life into one great organism of life, a multiple symbiosis . . . and that was called *The Covenant*. But why mention it; you who live in your cavern of flatness, the two-dimension world of the surface of the earth will never accept any such fantasy out of the past. So I put it into a story . . .

I write it, and tremble for it is forbidden to say you have been on the other side of the mountain where people have eyes.

You ask for the truth about the Shaver Mystery. I tell you the results of the caverns, the mighty life that once lived there, still speaks in each of you, and you don't recognize the voice!

There is a striving in us that we certainly don't get from our modern schooling. Nor from our

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immediate forebears. Do you think that in a few generations we could have developed as we have if we hadn't had it in us to begin with? It's hereditary instinct working out its life pattern.

There is a surge of strength comes into us when we listen to the little voice. There is a weakness comes over us when we do what that little voice from the past says not to do. It is such a still small voice; and there is one thing about it to learn: that is to listen for it, to respect what it says. To know that voice is to know yourself as you would have been if your birthright had not been stolen from you, long ago.

To fail to listen is to fail in all things. One wonders why things like this are not more generally known, and then one has one's answer when he realizes that any day the missiles may whistle overhead, destroying all our modern time and setting us back once again to the Dark Ages just past. How long do we have to avert that fate, this time? Long enough to learn to listen to our true instincts, to reestablish the covenant.

The little thing in your mind is the big thing.

The valuable truth is the fantastic truth.

Come to bed, little cobra! Why be so strange out in the dark.

It is too bad the whole Shaver mystery partakes of this alien unacceptability, for we could learn so much out of accepting it. The language of the Elder race, their wisdom in the little problems of life that today defeat us; their know-how on radioactivity and its side-effects on the mind of man; the still small voice within us and why it exists—so many things we could learn from the caves if we had the chance.

But as long as it is officially *verboten* to accept even a flying saucer as a fact . . . You finish that sentence yourself.

I don't know what we're going to do about things as big as the network of caverns under the whole earth surface. Someone has been stumbling over those caverns for thousands of years and getting laughed at for their trouble. The discovery usually fractures his poor brain trying to figure out why they don't exist when they do.

Or the poor devils like him, chased around the good old USA and other countries, too, by rays they are told not to believe in; hearing voices they are told "only exist in your own mind."

Believe me, keeping the Shaver mystery a mystery is a busy project for many, many employees, and it is a paying business looting the caverns before we learn what is going on. It is much bigger than any little old magazine of fiction. So don't expect anything of articles like this. They only happen because they are so futile the powers that be don't care. It's too fantastic, you know.

Honestly, are there deros, Shaver? It's funny how things so

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widely known can be so universally misunderstood. We are all either deros or teros. The best way to tell the two apart is to examine their syllogisms. The deros goes backward. And that is fantastic thinking. Simply impossible; until you happen to meet it head on.

Let me see *your* syllogism. Maybe you are "dero" too!

The cavern stone curtain, like our better known iron curtain, is built out of agony and despair, out of fear and greed, out of densest stupidity and the hard rock of sheer ignorance. It was constructed long ago, little by little, and has today become a physical part of every human on Earth. Or should we say mental part?

It is an unseen chain, a hidden band of ice about every mind. It is a block in every man's thinking apparatus. Like a hypnotist's leavings of post-hypnotic command. Every man alive knows there is no such thing as the stone curtain. He knows it instantly, invariably, and much too inevitably. He knows there are no little people; they are an outmoded child's fairy tale. He knows there are no true fairy tales; he has been taught that in his early schooling. He knows there are no dwarves; and no dwarves' treasures. There are no little green men; and if you see one, you don't have to believe your eyes, you just know you are crazy. He knows there is no such thing as telepathy; that is, almost no such thing; Dr. Rhine put a slight dent in this angle. He knows there are no leprechauns; they are an Irish joke. There are no spirits; they belong to the crackpots only. (Well, almost no spirits, he sometimes makes a wee reservation.) But he knows absolutely that to hear voices is to be mad! In fact, "Do you ever hear voices?" is the first question on the psychoanalyst's list of pertinent questions. If someone answers a so brilliant Doctor "yes" to this question, he is *ipso facto*, mad as a hare.

He knows, this modern man, there are no things on Earth that "science" does not understand and have neatly catalogued in their profound texts. He knows that "saucers" are illusions of crackpots and "incompetent observers," because so many newspapers and TV programs have assured him on that score—that there is nothing to worry about. Science has proved that by discrediting everyone who ever saw anything like a saucer, that saucers are as ridiculously impossible as leprechauns.

The stone curtain and Santa Claus have just one thing in common. Everybody knows there is no such thing, except children and fools. Yet, come Xmas, gifts are given, and the results are much the same as if there really was a Santa Claus.

Yes, the stone curtain has its results, too. They are just as all-embracing as Xmas, but in a different key than Noël. They are in the Key of Satan, and they are

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just as real as if Satan really existed.

Behind these results is the stone curtain, obscuring forever their true significance. And behind the stone curtain . . . Well let's peek . . .

We might catch the devil, you know! But let's peek anyway. After all, there is no such thing, so why worry?

The first thing you see when you peek behind the stone curtain is (are) the girls. When you look behind Santa Claus you see toys, don't you? Well, behind Satan are his girls, his toys.

Now, if you should go as far as to look behind the girls, you would see . . . slaves. Slaves in salvaged linen suits that were stylish perhaps a hundred years ago; other slaves in nothing at all but their skin; slaves in kilts like Assyrians . . .

But who wants to look at slaves, you say? Why pass over the girls?

Okay, perhaps you're right. We'll take things in their natural order of importance.

The girls; why so many, one wonders at first? Then one wonders where are their men? Then one wonders where they went? Answers? *Verboten,* the only answer. Forbidden, no, not—the most used words in the underworld are the negatives.

Any answer to any natural question is forbidden. You have to guess, and if you guess right, you're in trouble.

A lot of the girls are a part of the curtain, the first line of defense behind the stone of ignorance. They are there to seduce the intruder into acceptance, into silence, perhaps into death, one guesses. But one never quite knows.

They are off-duty, amusing themselves with stim and the newcomer's innocent virility, one guesses. But one isn't sure. The closest guess as to their duties is that they are there to amuse the saucer crews when they come in from their space voyaging. They are the equivalent of the old time dance hall girl of the western gold town. They are there to get the gold from the miner. That the miner comes from space, and the gold he mines is the thirty-thousand-year-old gadgetry of the cavern cities of the dead past . . . that is the truth of the reason for the girls.

The saucer crews spend a lot of time in space. When they berth in the ancient halls of the Elder race, they are ready for some release from the monotony and danger of their voyage; that voyage in a ship that cannot exist to a port that does not exist. We *know* that, you and I. We *know* it; but just the same, this knowing is a part of the stone curtain the centuries have erected between Earth man and his greatest treasures, the Caves of Treasures of the Elder men.

So the alien saucers come and go, and our girls amuse their crews, and our treasures go to the space nations who can't be bothered conquering us because

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we can be so easily duped it isn't necessary to fight with us. Mighty weapons and inventions that it took a mighty race a hundred thousand years to develop are sold to the saucers by Satan. They are Satan's girls, and they are very nice girls, too. But they are not enemies, for they can't help what goes on any more than you or I, and after all, Satan does not exist. But like Santa, Satan has his toys, and his results, and his Sabbath.

One finally gets around to seeing that the ancient myth of Satan and his underworld is an ancient part of the curtain, a kind of erotic decoration on the surface of the stone of ignorance. And that the fact behind Satan is an alien being, who has the very worst intentions toward the human race on Earth. He has his caverns, and his ships of space, and his harems; his business selling the ancient gadgetry to the ships of space whose home ports he alone knows; and he has the whole surface of Earth in complete ignorance of himself and his ways and his purposes. So, long ago, he started building his stone curtain, finally completing it in the Fifteenth Century when the burning of the witches everywhere finally eliminated all who knew anything about the caverns and of those who live there and what they do. From there on it was simple to keep us all in ignorance.

So, we get past the girls, after finally understanding what they are and what they do, and we get to the slaves, who background every view. The slaves, who do everything, have nothing, say nothing, want nothing; they may look, but they may not touch. They look out at us, and know that we are no more than themselves, except that in our ignorance we sometimes feel free and easy; and they envy us our ignorance. We have little else for them to envy except plenty to eat. They envy us our plenty.

One question I can't remember being asked, though I have often wondered why: "What is the actual appearance of the caverns? How did they live, this Elder race? What kind of decoration, how did it look when they were here?"

It is odd this question hasn't occurred more often, they certainly hit me with enough questions, but always based upon proof: "What is the proof?" "How do you know it's true?" etc. Never: "How does it look?"

For those who think about the Mystery enough to get to this question, I'll answer it, now.

There are two striking features of the cavern decor that hit one first. These people loved nature, loved trees so much they used them as decoration motifs. A great doorway to some cathedral-like gathering hall is flanked, guarded, by pillars that are tree trunks. Carved from the living rock, stylized, but recognizably simulated trees; so much so as to

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give the illusion of deep forest. The cathedral-like sensation one gets in a virgin forest of titanic trees is present, is quite as overwhelming as nature herself.

This forest motif is carried out in many ways. There are metal gardens, simulated plants of gold and silver and other noncorroding metals; with fruit that are gems, rare and huge gems, too, used for decoration. They did not seem to regard gems in the same way we do, nor the precious metals, either. Gold was commonly used as a sheathing for their mechanical devices, and every chamber contained many built-in devices, and most of them were sheathed in gold even though the metal of which they were built was almost as uncorruptible as gold itself.

Aside from the continual use of the forest motif in cavern architectural decoration, the second most striking feature is the oriental flavor, a sort of Chinese-Modern-Egyptian or Egyptian-Chinese-Modern are the only combination of words that could bring the slightest flavor of their art to the modern mind. I think that both the ancient Chinese and the ancient Egyptians had some knowledge of cavern art; that they both stem directly from contact with artists who had seen the cavern dwellings. There is a very definite Chinese and Egyptian flavor to cavern art, though in many ways they are most dissimilar, the similarity of an original with an imitation.

They used a great deal of wood. It was wood impregnated with wax or resins, quite indestructible except by fire. Their furniture was more often natural wood than plastic, though plastic was a common material for furniture.

You cannot fix cavern art in any definite concept, as you can Greek art of the time of Pericles; or as Egyptian art, even separated by several dynasties, is still recognizably Egyptian. Different areas of the caverns were built in periods separated by tens of thousands of years, and going from one to the other is like stepping from an Aztec temple into the Acropolis, only the change is vastly greater. Greater because they were a people who lived intensely, to whom change was a rapid and necessary part of life and development. You can go from the understandable and familiar to the incomprehensible and utterly awesome in a few steps.

So it is that no description of the caverns as they were when the Elder race lived can be adequate. There are no words for what they did with wood and stone and paint. It can't be expressed verbally.

One can only try to describe what the caverns are today, the looted empty shell of the past, still echoing the mighty grandeur of God-like life, but with all the beauty stripped from the walls, the gold sheathing torn from the mechanism that even the looters from other worlds could not com-

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prehend or use or even attempt to remove.

Here and there some little chamber of common utility remains untouched because nothing of value was there to cause its destruction. The quiet comfort of these chambers remains at the branching of the cavern ways, still used by the secret wayfarers. The seats carved out of the living rock are proof against vandals; the urns of heavy pottery are almost unbreakable; sometimes in the accompanying coffee houses most of the crockery is still intact because it was built for hard use and has literally survived the test of time.

But their great and luxurious dwellings are utterly vandalized, the wonder-mech stripped of parts, even the power cables ripped out of the cable-tunnels; so that to say the caverns appear like anything but a wrecked warehouse is to tell an untruth. They are but the mighty wreck left by centuries of wanton and ruthless vandalism and warfare. Still, they contain the most valuable things on Earth today, but how long anything of value will remain is hard to say. Not long, for sure.

Polished mirror-finish walls and ceilings cause endless echoes and endlessly repeating mirror effects. These echoes, and the endless corridors and vast tramway tunnels (yes, they called them trams, too: *Intramen* and *extramen;* but their tram was a very different apparatus than the modern noisy, iron-wheeled and iron-tracked devices we use) intensify the lost-to-man feeling you get from the immensity; the huge size of the average chair (the average man of the best Elder period was nearly nine feet tall); the lushness of their pleasure domes; their game rooms, so very big; the bowling balls no man of today can begin to heave. Their games were often quite intricate; for instance I recall a mechanical race track that must have been built for children, for the life-size camels and dogs (many animals) which were the racing figures were almost small enough to be modern. The device must have been similar to our modern slot machine in design. You never could tell which racer was going to come in first. There is a gloomy feeling about activating these play devices, for they are so joyously colored and the hidden music devices give you a forlorn effect of past time and the lostness of the race who built so cleverly, so beautifully.

The children's pleasure domes are almost invariably equipped with mechanical riding animals which are in reality extremely efficient and dependable robots. A child's rocking horse for *their* children meant an animal, shaped like a huge rabbit, a small elephant, a large dog, a lion, a tiger, other animals quite unidentifiable today, a room full of them, all ready to go from the mere pressure of a child's weight on their back. They run sedately,

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a knee pressure increases the speed to a good running pace, but the seat is as steady and the motion as unbumpy as can be imagined.

The remarkable thing about these play animals is that they are so lifelike, and that many of them still operate.

If you are one of those who want proof, these animals can be found in old fairy tales. Perhaps the best known is the tale of the "Flying Horse" that belonged to the wizard. There are hundreds of descriptions of these ancient pleasure robots in old writings. They were one of the things occasionally brought to the surface by the first explorers of the caverns. Other things that occasionally appeared on the surface world of the recent Dark Ages were the gems, the miniature paintings, some of the needle work of the Little People which was a marvel to the ancients of the surface time of Pericles, time of Rome, etc. Some of the "magic books"—and an Aladdin or two who brought up remote control devices which operated mechanisms in the caverns below and with which they could work certain magics on the surface. One of these was Merlin. There are dozens of others described in ancient "fairy tales," "myths," etc. Mostly the magic devices were used to create phantasms, chimaeras, apparitions and fairy pictures which were all quite adequate for the magician's purpose of overawing and enslaving an ignorant audience, would still be adequate today for the same purpose and is sometimes done, but secretly, instead of openly, for some few of the public today would fathom the deception.

To get back to the actual cavern life, the appearance of the caverns today, one of the most striking features of the cavern dwellings are *the windows*. Every room of importance had two windows. This was a device somewhat similar to our modern TV but vastly more developed. It gave a view of the surface world, and some of their dwellings were solidly walled with the screens of these devices, so that when they were all operating, an illusion of being in the open air above was created. The basic difference between this device and TV of modern times was the penetray, which made possible vision through the solid rock.

This window business they went in for so heavily is apparently another symptom of their almost mania for the works of nature. It seems to me to reveal that they suffered from a sort of claustrophobia because they were forced to live in the caverns against their natural inclinations, and sought by every means to dispel the depressing effect of knowing a couple of miles of solid rock pressed down over their heads.

They brought in the sunlight with their windows; they had natural gardens of exotic plants everywhere as well as the formal metal gardens (but of course

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these natural gardens are today empty of everything but soil pockets, soil which is itself today nothing but a black dust). The caverns were beautiful beyond belief when the Elder race was at its peak, which was quite a while before the last blowoff of the sun finally finished them off. There were several recurring sun convulsions, separating the various periods of their development, and their last period was not their greatest.

To know the history of the cavern race is to know that sun explosions are inevitable. It is why they built the caverns and why they lived in them, because no surface civilization is safe from sun convulsions. It is quite evident knowing what happened to them that such will be the end of our own culture if we do not manage it sooner with our atom bombs. One little sunburst, sending surface temperatures to only fifty or a hundred degrees above normal, would finish us off. The Elder race survived dozens of these sun scourgings, and I often wonder if it was the last sun explosion that finished them off or whether they were not attacked by some enemy from space; perhaps the same enemy who loots their caverns today?

If we are to survive the next sunburst, we must have learned by then to go into the caverns, for only the rock roof of the cavern world is proof against what our sun has been up to in the past.

For corroboration consult your book of myths, the myth about the sun horses, the chariot driven by the sun god. The horses run away, the earth is scorched . . .

It is all there, in the myths, even to the world of Pluto you know. But of course, too fantastic to be true!

There is no certainty like ignorant certainty. They know, so very well and so very surely they know, what is true and what is not true about the past! They ignore the myths and they cultivate the boneyards of the destruction itself.

Even the bones mean nothing to them.

THE END

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The Shaver Mystery—
DANGEROUS NONSENSE

By A. J. STEICHERT

A. J. Steichert has been a foe of the Shaver Mystery since its beginnings some ten years ago. In this indictment of something Mr. Steichert considers to be an uncamouflaged menace, he unlimbers his heaviest guns—and proves he is far more than a chronic "view-with-alarmer."

ON MAY 21, 1951, *Life* Magazine, quoting a science fiction fan, said that "the Shaver Mystery was actually endangering the sanity of its readers." They didn't say it themselves, but they may well have done so. Instead *Life* called it a "celebrated rumpus that rocked the science fiction world."

The pertinent fact, brought out by *Life*, was the thousands of letters that poured in to the editors of *Amazing Stories*, many of them corroborating Shaver, affirming the existence of the caverns and the dero and all the rays and mentalisms of a super race, long gone, and now degenerated to sheer idiocy and savage malignancy. Therein lay the real danger in the Shaver Mystery, and quite in keeping with the threat to the mental balance of science fiction readers who followed the Mystery.

That the Mystery was a dangerous influence was demonstrated by the instance of one of its fans drowning himself in the Chicago river after visiting the editors with a story rivaling Shaver's own in its fantastic tale of horror, persecution complex, and mental unbalance. True, the young man was already mad, but apparently his exposure to the Mystery had been enough to shove him over the brink to despair. Faced with an apparently proven reality behind his own delusions, hope vanished, and suicide resulted.

However, one instance does not make a case. Let us look, instead, at the Mystery itself, and see what it actually holds for us. First, the whole thing is based

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on the claim that the Earth is honeycombed, for fantastic depths (as much as four hundred miles down had been mentioned) with caverns and tunnels whose ramifications are stupendous. Said Shaver: "The livable area of these caverns, because of their extension into three dimensions, is thousands of times that of all the surface area of the world." How does this compare to scientific thought on the construction of the Earth? According to geologists, and physicists, the existence of such a vast hollow area in the rock shell of the planet is impossible, due to the tremendous pressure. At these depths, theorize scientists, rock flows like molasses, and any opening would be most certainly closed and filled under such fluidic action. Further, we know from going down into deep mines that the temperature rises for each 100 feet in depth by one degree, although this is not specifically a constant. At the depth of four hundred miles, we certainly would not find a livable temperature! We would find what science believes exists, rock in a molten state, yet rigid enough because of the tremendous pressure acting upon it. Certainly no caverns.

We could grant the existence of hollow areas at depths of four miles, but here we would run into the problem of ventilation. How would fresh air be forced down into these great depths? And if it were circulating, especially through such a tremendous area of caverns as described by Shaver, why is it that nowhere in the world do we find enormous currents of air either emanating from the earth, or entering into it?

In Shaver's stories, he tells many times of "rays" that penetrate through many miles of solid rock. Even twenty miles is a sinecure. Consider the energy necessary to force any electronic wave or ray we can conceive through so much rock. It takes very high voltage to send X-rays through the human form, and a relatively thin shield of lead can stop them utterly. Even cosmic rays, the most potent known to science, are stopped by a few dozen feet of rock, or by a few fathoms of water. Cosmic ray counts have been made in deep mines and found virtually nonexistent.

It is significant to note that Shaver told of spaceships visiting this planet long before Kenneth Arnold saw the saucers (oddly enough in the shape described by Shaver). It is a well-known fact among psychologists that the mass human mind is very susceptible to suggestion. It is entirely within the realm of possibility that the flying saucers themselves, a mass hysteria phenomenon, could have been due to the influence of the enormous circulation (for a magazine of its type), and the continuous suggestion of four years of such stories as Shaver

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wrote, bearing as it did upon adolescent and bizzare-tending minds.

All through Shaver's stories one finds a finely interwoven mass of mythology and legend. In fact, so intricately worked together are they that they give the apparent sense of being a well-knit whole. The fact that all of mythology and legend is, by necessity, vague and formless, should instantly suggest that the knitted whole is not so perfectly integrated after all. That giants existed once on earth can be proved by mythology and legend, but where can it be proven by actual anthropological remains? If the Earth bore so prolific a race of giants as Shaver describes, where are their remains today? He says they existed as late as 12,000 years ago.

We find perfectly preserved mastodons frozen in ice for perhaps six to ten thousand years, why then no "giants," since they apparently were contemporary?

This vast Atlan and Titan civilization, he says, was highly mechanized. We can well believe this when we read his stories, and read of the battles fought by armies armed with incredible juggernauts of destruction, big as city blocks. Certainly, somewhere on Earth, after only 12,000 years, we would find some small fragment of those once innumerable and gigantic machines. Yet, as recently as 3,000 years ago, in the highest civilization we know of on Earth today, the Egyptian, we find an almost wholly agrarian civilization, limited in its machines to the wheel, used largely for war chariots. Where are the fantastic "telaugs," machines that actually read minds? Where are the equally fantastic "stim" machines, so replete with gadgets stimulating to the nervous system?

Which brings us to the preoccupation with sex we find in all the Shaver stories. Here we find a constant reminder of the importance and influence of that sexual electricity which is peculiar to women and which so charges (and discharges) those lucky or unlucky males who grasp a live wire while standing in water. Luckily, in most cases, the "live wire" is a woman who is master, or mistress, rather, of a machine which can perform veritable miracles with the electricity she herself generates, augmenting it to brain-searing (albeit pleasant!) amperage.

All through the stories we find "snake women," many-armed women (the better to hug you with), and multiple-breasted women—to say nothing of women thirty feet tall, who are (rather unreasonably, we'd say) approached by amorous male six-footers, puny midgets by comparison, and certainly hardly a biological match for the woman whose "terrific body-electric" (we quote) so irresistibly draws them to her, as moths to a flame.

Apparently the "lovers" of

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that ancient civilization felt that Nature had been remiss in their sensory development, and so they had to augment the sensations usually pleasurable enough to their nervous systems. They developed a "chamber" called a stim machine in which they actually lived for weeks at a time, engaged in a terrific dalliance that, because of beneficent "nutrients," left them not in the least exhausted nor sated.

The science of the Shaver Mystery is strange indeed. For instance, the matter of mass and inertia. Shaver apparently has them confused in his mind, and when he places his mass in space (in the form of a space ship), it loses all of its subjectivity to the laws of inertia, and thus can accelerate instantly to light speed, and worse, do it by the mere pressure of a light beam.

Gravity, he says, is a push, not a pull. Some sort of substance called "exd" (the ashes of matter which has disintegrated) continuously "falls" toward the center of any existing mass, such as the earth, and as it passes through this mass, causes a frictional drag on that mass which he called gravity. However, push or pull, it is still there, and always there. Shaver chooses to ignore it, when he wishes, for the purposes of his stories.

Age, says he, is caused by "radioactives" thrown by the sun. If, as he says, it was a terrible danger back in those ancient days of the Titans, and it goes on all the time, why is it that our "background radiation" today, after many hundreds of centuries, is not very much higher than it was then, and our lives not shortened even further, if not actually rendered impossible. Why is it that a piece of stone laid down millions of years ago is no less radioactive than a bit of hardened mud laid down a thousand years ago? This minor background radiation does not threaten to wipe us out today, why should it have been so fearsome 12,000 years ago?

There is, throughout all the Shaver stories, a thread of irresponsibility. Why try to be good, when there is, at all times, a "dero" somewhere beneath your feet who will drive you, willy-nilly, to some evil act, no matter how you wish to resist? The answer is, not to resist. If things go wrong, don't blame yourself, blame it on the dero. If you fall down the stairs, a dero tripped you with a ray. Don't fix the stairs, it wasn't the loose tread —and if it was tight, a dero would loosen it!

This type of thinking is very handy for the person to whom responsibility is an irksome condition. And yet, when used as Shaver uses it, any suggestion of personal responsibility becomes persecution. Do we find here the true reason for the "tamper" rays of the dero? Is your neighbor a "dero," or dero-controlled, if he points out your responsibility, or takes some action against your irresponsibility?

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Imagine the result if everyone believed that train wrecks and airplane crashes were due to some mad dero in a cave playing with a destructive ray, shooting wildly at everything that moved for sadistic pastime? What state of mind for the engineer who sees a green light before him, but wonders if it isn't actually red, and he seeing green due to a tamper ray working on his mind? If all this actually were true, it would be better that we remained unaware of it!

The Shaver Mystery is dangerous nonsense, most dangerous because its nonsense seems to make sense. But what should make sense to anyone who reads it is the patent lack of any concrete evidence, any actual artifact, any discovered cavern containing evidence of its inhabitants, any ancient ruins to demonstrate the actuality of the existence in the past of these enormously advanced races. True, there are ruins in the world which speak of races completely forgotten today, but they are ruins not far removed in science development from the pyramids. A giant wall built without mortar, or a road that leads into the sea—lost civilizations, yes, but nothing mysteriously un-understandable. Even these most ancient of ruins bear the marks of the common chisel, or of the chipping stone. Nowhere the evidence of superior tools, cutting rays, marvelous inventions. No impenetrable rock with its atoms "densely packed."

There is the matter of his Mantong Alphabet. There are, in various countries, dozens of weird meanings given to the alphabet. Churchward would have us believe that the alphabet tells the story of the flood, and of the sinking of Lemuria. So, Shaver's idea of giving each letter a personal meaning, then building a mountain of mis-meaning by piling words upon one another, is not new. In reality, there are a variety of word-games of the parlor variety which are as logical as his. But when he says English is the original language, spoken all over space, and that all the Earth's tongues stemmed from English, he is ignoring all the research into language of hundreds of years, all the rules of philology, and all the records of history. The further back into antiquity we go, the further we get from English. Where is the resemblance in Sanskrit to English? Where the resemblance in Chinese? Where, indeed the resemblance even in the basic alphabet, 26 letters (two of which are really modern additions) to the many more letters in Chinese and other languages?

Shaver has demonstrated, and so has Palmer, I believe, an ability at deciphering words in languages unknown to them. I should have put quotes around the word "decipher," because a number of explanations for this ability suggest themselves. Dr. Rhine, of Duke University, has ably demonstrated that some sort of mental telepathy is possible,

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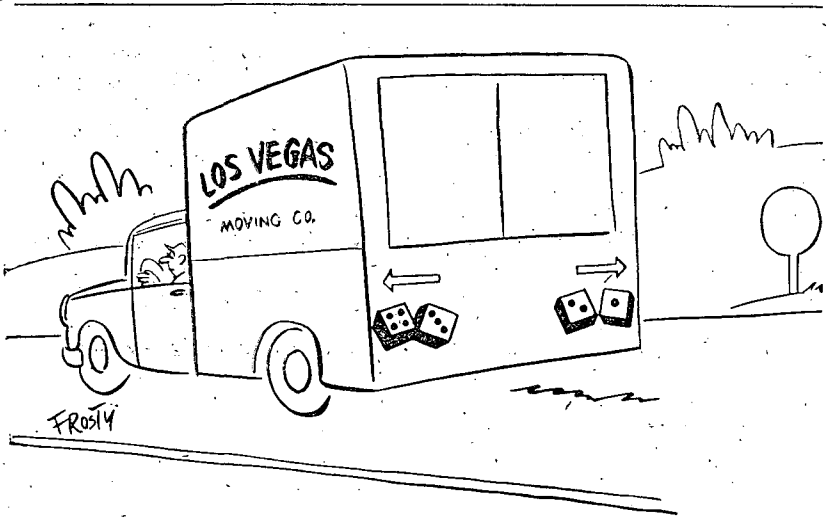
and most likely is an actuality in some people. Dr. Ashley-Cock, language expert, once told me that he had interviewed both men, and was convinced that what they were doing was reading his mind. Perhaps. But one thing is sure, the Shaver Alphabet cannot be the original language. If it acts in any way to decipher words, it does so through its generalities, not its specifics.

In my opinion the Shaver Mystery is pure fiction. Excellent fiction, to be sure, and fascinating reading—if one remembers that it is fantasy, and should be accepted as such. None of us denies that there is much pleasure in escapism, as a relief from the realities of life. The danger lies in allowing ourselves to believe in our own fantasies. That way lies, if not madness, at least irresponsibility.

Shaver has a brilliant imagination, one of the most brilliant I have ever seen. He should write his fiction as prolifically as he can, for the entertainment of his readers. To that there could be no objection, and perhaps it would be the best sort of therapy for the man who most needs it! Unless he has cleverly fooled me, too, and is secretly laughing at all of us for "falling for" his literary contrivances. If so, the name Richard Shaver will be remembered perhaps in the same way that Grimm is remembered for his fairy-tales, or Jonathan Swift for his Lilliput.

But to say he speaks the truth is dangerous nonsense.

THE END



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THE KEY TO MANTONG— The Ancient Language

By RICHARD S. SHAVER and JOEL KOS

Mantong, the ancient language of the Shaver Mystery, has been the subject of much controversy; experts on the language have sprung up, and—as is the case with every phase of the Shaver Mystery—it has hosts of admirers and critics. Actually, your own judgment as to its authenticity is every bit as authoritative as that of anyone else.

IN ORDER that you may have at least the partial use of a very wonderful aid to understanding what you are about to read, I will give you the most important single piece of wisdom I learned from the cavern people, the key to the meaning of the alphabet of the ancient language, Mantong, the "tongue of man" as it is spoken everywhere throughout space, wherever the races of man may be found.

Here is a tool that can be used to confirm the ancient race, to trace the remnants existing today, in modern languages. Here is a way to unearth for yourself the ancient story of Atlantis, Lemuria (Mu) and the race of Titans and Atlans who inhabited the Earth many thousands of years ago, and who fled the Earth because of a tremendous catastrophy, leaving behind the ancestors of the present underground race I call the "dero" and "tero." The difference I will explain later. For now, I will deal with the alphabet; because without it, you cannot begin to understand the terminology I will use constantly. Nor, without it, can you check with me in your own way, through actual research of your own that can be done while sitting in your own armchair with results that cannot fail but to astound you.

Although the alphabet is a beginning, and a key, there is also a dictionary; and it is regrettable that such a dictionary cannot be provided in comprehensive form along with the alphabet, for it would be a valuable help, a tremendous shortcut to your rapid understanding of what it is that I am trying to convey to you. As I progress, your dictionary of

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the ancient language will increase, and I hope that one of the results of my work will be an actual compilation of that dictionary.

The alphabet is a strange one, in many respects. First, it is one that causes the etymological experts of philology to snort with disdain, because it violates the time-table they have set up in their so-learned books. Language derivations, they say, go back into ancient times to such languages as Sanskrit, Chinese, Egyptian and Latin and on down to the so-called Romance languages, Spanish, French, etc. And the most modern of them all, they say, is English, which is largely Anglo-Saxon. The reason for their laughter is my claim that the most ancient of all alphabets, that of Mantong, the one I present to you here, is in English!

"There you are!" they snort. "Obviously the man is wrong. We can prove beyond all possible doubt, even to an idiot, that English is not an ancient language, but is made up of bits of all previous languages, and is a hodgepodge that resulted from just such an amalgamation."

It is here that they have made a serious mistake. Language is phonetic. A sound is a sound, and no matter where uttered, it is the *same* sound. The alphabet is a series of sounds from which words are made. They are the basic building blocks of language. They are called "letters." Sometimes one wonders why we call them letters, until we think about writing letters (alphabets) and realize that is how we communicate with each other. Thus, the Mantong alphabet is presented in the only way in which it can be presented, as *sounds*. The only way I have to present these sounds is in their English equivalent. Yet, I do not try to evade the philologists by so meek a tactic—I say here and now, beyond all possible revocation, that English is *closer* to the original language of Man than any other language; and it is closer because it is not an amalgamation, but the mother lode of all language.

There are many meanings attached to letters. For instance, Churchward has the alphabet telling the story of the sinking of ancient Mu; each letter in order being a portion of that tale. This is easy to do, by simply ascribing the proper meaning to each letter. Yet all these things, on which I advance no opinion one way or the other, are evidence that it is a popular concept that the individual letters do have meanings. But what are those meanings, *actually?*

What other meanings could they have than those useful in compiling words that describe what it is wished that they describe?

Sometimes to make a point, we must first make an assumption. Here I will make one; the assumption that this ancient race *did* exist. It did, but I haven't described it to you as yet—so if you will bear with me, I will speak as

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though you are already convinced of the reality of that ancient race which I have actually contacted. This ancient race is not native to Earth. It comes from Space, and it is ancient beyond belief in the sense that it is hundreds of millions of years old, and Earth is but a baby in comparison, the race actually pre-dating the formation of the planet itself. One of the things done by the ancient race is the "seeding down" of new planets to humanity. Obviously my readers will see that I am going contrary to the ordinary concept of evolution, since what I am saying is that Man did not evolve on this planet, but was placed here, just as he has been placed on many other planets, some of them long dissolved and gone into the primal elements from which they were originally created. Yet I do not say that evolution does not happen, from the original cell implanted in the primal ocean to the complex animal forms that walk the land and fly through the air. Man is none of these.

Picture, if you will, Man placed on a young planet, teeming with evolved life. He is placed there to master it (and himself). One of his first needs is communication. Those who placed him there have a language, a basic one, which if reason is used, is obviously always the same basic pattern. It is a collection of sounds which it is possible for the human voice to produce. Now, if those sounds were meaningless in themselves, they would contain no meaning even when collected in groups. If "A" has no meaning, nor "P," nor "E," then neither has "APE." So, A, P, and E have individual meanings. Put together they have a meaning that *perfectly* describes an APE. If one member of this ancient race I am speaking of were to meet another member on a far planet from Earth, and were to describe the evolved life forms of Earth, he could get across to his hearer a perfect picture of what an Earth Ape is, simply by the word which describes it. No picture would be necessary. If the letters in the word have a definite meaning, the word meaning should be quite clear to the person having a *complete* knowledge of the basic meanings of the letters.

Thus, as we read in the Bible: "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field . . ." (Genesis 2:19, 20) You will note that even the Bible agrees that the beasts and fowl were formed out of the ground, or by evolutionary processes, but that Man was formed differently: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

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(Genesis 2:7) Note that he was formed out of the "dust" of the ground. This "dust" is the same I will describe to you later as "exd." Adam was complete, when formed, with no intermediate forms. He did not come "out of the ground." He received the "breath of life" and became a "living soul" right then and there. Later on, when we study the words with the meaning of the alphabet before us, we will get a very exciting picture out of the Book of Genesis.

The point I want to make here is the "naming" of the animals, etc., by Adam. Adam, you won't argue, was the "first man." Reasonably he cannot be anything else but a member of the ancient race, the "first men." Not an animal. Not an evolutionary product of the planet Earth. Adam named all the animals *correctly*, and the key he used in naming them was the alphabet. He knew what each letter meant, and when he saw the animal, brought before him by the Lord God, he inspected it, and pieced together the proper letters into a word that would describe the animal, so that the uttering of the word would identify the animal even though not seen by the hearer of the word. This is very important, and should be very obvious. If a language is a method of communication, it must be exactly that, and not a meaningless symbolism which must be accompanied in all cases with a sample of the item being spoken of. We cannot carry an elephant with us to show our hearer what we mean by the word. It is not a matter of association. Such a language would be quite impractical, and once the object were non-existent, the word would be meaningless. I will admit that much of our own language today is meaningless. We teach the meanings of words strictly by association. It is a matter of memory, solely. A visitor from another world, hearing our spoken *words*, could not possibly know what we were talking about.

But with the meanings of these *sounds* (the letters) clear in his mind, he could dissect our words, and discover their basic meaning. He could communicate with us, with *any* race, without the process of a complete memorization (and association with his own language) of our language, done laboriously by uttering the word, and showing him simultaneously the object the word is supposed to represent. He could not identify the Ape-word without the Ape-object beside it. Thereafter he would remember it—and how confused he would be to hear the word "ape" later on and be told it didn't mean an animal at all, but the act of imitation!

There *is* a basic universal meaning to every sound (and therefore to every written letter representing that sound—and the writing of the letter also comes from a pictorial source, pictography).

When you want to name something, you form a word. Then you tack that word onto an ob-

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ject, and associate the two, and memorize the association. You "coin" a word. You use letters in making it up. You also use two or more words in combination. The result is meaningless to everybody but ourselves until we "educate" them to the meaning; *unless* we use the true meaning of the letters. Many of our words today, in the English language, and in any other language for that matter, are basically meaningless, and they also present a totally false meaning, because they are just happenstance combinations of letters chosen at random to "tag" a new object or idea or action.

But when Adam named the animals, he was using the basic, unchanging meaning of the sounds (letters), and he named correctly. What is unfortunate is that the phonetics have come down to us either distorted or lost in many cases, and we find the words paradoxical, even when viewed from the Alphabet base. When Adam said "Ape," just how did it *sound?* Say it out loud. Ape. *Two* sounds. *Not* three! A broad "A" and an explosive "p." The *proper* phonetic spelling of Ape is "Ap." When Adam said it, did he say "A-pe"? I think he did. Today we have lost the phonetics in part, retaining only the written form which includes the "E." Why the "E"? Because without it, the word Ape does not mean the animal Adam named! What impressed Adam was the likeness of the ape to man (and therefore to himself), but with the added factor that he did not possess, the *great power* of the ape! An ape was a creature similar to himself, but with great power, enormous *energy*.

By now you must have grasped the meaning of at least one of the letters of the ancient alphabet. P means *power*. Whenever Adam saw an animal whose power impressed him, he *quite logically*, and *by necessity*, included the letter "P" in the word that described the animal.

Now you will ask what "E" means, and why Adam placed the letter *after* the "P" in ape? When one letter modifies or complements another, it is placed immediately following it. E is *energy*. It is an overall concept of energy, and includes the idea of motion. The only way the ape could express his power was through motion, yet the power was there even when he did not move. He possessed the energy and it need not be applied to him from some outside source. When he wanted to use his power, he simply went into action, into movement. He was: Animal with Powerful Energy. And there you have the meaning of "A." It is "animal," and the word was used more correctly as "An."

Now, before I go any further, I will give you the alphabet, with meanings, so that you may follow me in a few sample expositions of the use of the alphabet. From there you can proceed on your own—you will have the vital tool necessary to proceed.

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THE MANTONG ALPHABET

A—Animal.	(Used AN for short).
B—Be.	To exist. (Often used as a "command").
C—Con.	To see. (C-on; to understand).
D—De.	Detrimental, disintegrant energy. (The second most important symbol in the alphabet).
E—Energy.	(An all-pervading concept including the idea of motion).
F—Fecund.	(Used "fe," as in fe-male—fecund man).
G—Generate.	(Used "gen").
H—Human.	(A very metaphysical concept here, not fully understood, but used in the sense "H-you-man": a human is an H-Man).
I—Self. Ego.	(Same as our English I).
J—Generate.	(A duplication of G, but with a delicate difference in shade of meaning. Actually Ja, in contrast to Ge is a very important distinction. G is the generating energy, while J is animal generation per se.)
K—Kinetic.	(The force of motion).
L—Life.	
M—Man.	
N—Seed.	Spore. (Child, as "ninny").
O—Orifice.	(A source concept).
P—Power.	
Q—Quest.	(As "quest-ion").
R—Horror.	Danger. (Used AR, symbol of a dangerous quantity of disintegrant force in the object.)
S—Sun.	(Used "sis"; an important symbol, always referring to a "sun" whose energy is given off through atomic disintegration.)
T—Integration, Growth.	(Used TE; the most important symbol of the alphabet; the true origin of the cross symbol. It signifies the integrative force of growth; as, all matter is growing—the intake of gravity is the cause. The force is T. TIC means the science of growth. Integration-I-Con (understand).
U—You.	
V—Vital.	(Used as VI; the stuff Mesmer called "animal magnetism").
W—Will.	
X—Conflict.	(Force lines crossing each other).
Y—Why.	
Z—Zero.	Nothing. Neutralization. (A quantity of energy of T neutralized by an equal quantity of D. Futility.)

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In presenting this alphabet to you, I have given you, in my estimation, one of the most valuable pieces of information you will ever receive in this life. It is inestimably useful, and thorough, thoughtful study of it will reveal that fact to you. It is immensely important, but to understand takes a good head, as the alphabet will reveal in a language a rather strange sort of multiple-thought (like many "puns" on the subject). Many times you will believe the result is meaningless, unless you bear in mind the subtle "underthought" that always seems to be present, often of a very humorous nature.

As an example, let us take the word "trocadero." You have no doubt often seen it used as the name for a nightclub, or a theatre, or any place where entertainment is offered. In applying the alphabet to the world, we come up with this: T-Ro-See-A-D-Ro. (Tero see a dero). Ro is an ancient word, first one you'll include in your dictionary of the ancient language of Atlan, meaning "controlled": patterned by a governing force from an AR source, a "horrible" source. (Matter is horrible, in another of those delicate shades of meaning that will be fully explained by me in my description of the ancient race's science.) The meaning of trocadero, said simply, is: Good one see a bad one. So, originally the word trocadero was coined to describe the very bad plays that were perpetrated in the name of entertainment. Today we have forgotten the "pun" intended, the derisive application of the word to the calibre of actors and plays given in the period of the origin of the word, and we apply it only to the *place* where such plays are given. So next time you go to "The Trocadero," don't be surprised if you aren't overly enthusiastic about the quality of the entertainment being offered. Instead, have a good laugh at the owner who so aptly named his establishment!

Let us take the word "romantic." Today it has a meaning largely referring to being sentimental about love. This is a far cry from the meaning we get when we study the word with the alphabet. RO-MAN-TIC (to break it down into the three ancient words of which it is composed), means "the science by which man is controlled." Man is ro to this science. To break it down into individual letters: horror - source - man - animal - integration - I - see. The horrible source of the man-animal's integration is understood by me. I know how to control man's growth. I am *romantic!*

It is very interesting to note that in the late 18th century and early 19th century, a movement of art and literature that subordinated form and finish to content, intellect to emotion, reason to imagination and intuition, the critical to the creative, cleverness and wit to tenderness

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and pathos, and which emphasized the mystery and beauty of life: typified in France by Rousseau, in Germany by Goethe, Schelling, Schlegel, Lessing, etc., in England by Gray, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rossetti and Carlyle, was called *Romanticism!* The word still has that connotation today, and many others. The romantic era was a period in man's growth in mentality, character and more tender, worthwhile things.

When the arrow was invented, it had to be named. It was aptly named! It was *doubly* horrible, hence the two R's. It "controlled" animals (and man-animals) quite effectively!

A mechanic is a man-animal who understands mech (machines). Mech is another word for your ancient dictionary. MEK. Man's Kinetic Energy made usable. By means of the kinetic energy in metals (and other substances as well) man was able to perform work. He invented a way to use the kinetic energy in matter to accomplish things. A machine's metals moved, and therefore performed work, gave off energy.

Not so many years ago a clever man invented a toy which he called "mechano." It was a toy composed of pieces of fabricated metal, nuts and bolts, wheels, string, gears and cogs, a small hand-crank, or even a tiny electric motor. It was called a very constructive, educational toy. It was named mechano. It is amazing to think that the word, supposedly not an ancient word at all, but brand new, coined in modern times, breaks down so aptly in the ancient alphabet, the ancient dictionary. Mech (by which) animal-man knows, or learns. An instructive mechanical toy. Yet we can all look up the ancient Mechanistic cult of thousands of years ago, to find the word is not new.

One of the most surprising uses to which you can put the alphabet, and one that offers a test of its authenticity, because results are far beyond the possibility of chance, is its use in determining the meaning of words in other languages than English, languages you do not understand. These words should first be taken in their phonetic spelling, and sometimes can be further translated by their actual written form.

Have someone speak foreign words to you that you do not already know. Apply the meanings of this alphabet to the phonetics, and then tell what you think the word means. In the Romance languages the percentage of "hits" will be low, but still far beyond chance, while the more ancient the language, the higher the ability to decipher the meaning.

As a rather random thought (and you will discover many little things such as the following in your search through words with the alphabet), the

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English word is God, which figures out: Generate-Source-Detrimental. Obviously this should prove the alphabet wrong in a very important way, because God certainly does not generate from a detrimental source. However, when we consider the German word Gott, we have occasion to think rather deeply. In German, Gott generates (or creates) from an *integrative* source, and further, the integration is so important that it is repeated. There are two T's. Super-integration. Not just forming already existing materials into objects, but forming the very material itself!

In connection with the letter B, the word BAN is closely associated, in the sense that B is a command. Be an animal, is what the word ban tells us. But here we are puzzled again. Apparently this is not true. When we tell something to be an animal, we do not ban it! That is a contradiction. Ban is a word that means forbid, in our present dictionary. It means "stay away to exist." Generally, if one is banned, or banished, he must stay away, for to return is punishable by death. To banish is to put out, put away. Once more we must refer to our Bible.

The command here is Be Animal. When Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, the Lord God said: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying; Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou are, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all the living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken." (Genesis 3-17:-23)

When we read these verses of the Bible, we are confused. It seems that before the breaking of the commandment not to eat of the tree, Adam did not eat herbs, nor bread. Was it because it was not necessary while in the Garden? And when the Lord God "clothed" Adam and Eve in skins, wasn't this unnecessary, for did not the Lord God find the pair hiding in the Garden, already wearing clothes to hide their nakedness? And does not the Lord God speak very mysteriously when he says "the man

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is becoming as one of us"? Adam is cursed back to the dust from whence he came, but specifically to the *ground*, in which we have already noted a distinction from dust? It is hard to understand.

Until we look at the word BAN in the light of the alphabet! Adam was commanded to *be an animal!* Now it all becomes logical. Adam did not eat herbs and bread before his fall, because he wasn't an animal. Was it because he was a spirit, like the Lord God and his mysterious companions, to whom he speaks? When the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve in skins, when they already had made their own clothing, was it rather in *flesh* that he clothed them? When he sentenced them to the ground, was it to the Earth!

Remember the angel with the flaming sword placed "to the east of Eden" to prevent Adam from returning to the Garden? What was to prevent him from re-entering on the west?

In ancient times, the four "cardinal" points of the compass were East - West - North - South, just as they are today; with two distinctions. The Earth was pictured as a flat disk, divided in half by a line laterally through the middle. The hemisphere on one side was called North, the hemisphere on the other, South. East was *down* and West was *straight up.* This mythological belief has always been ignored by the learned, but it *did* exist. In the light of the alphabet's meaning of the word BAN, and the flaming sword only on one side of the Garden, it becomes quite logical. Adam and Eve were cast from the Garden of Eden, which does not exist on the surface of the Earth (is that why it cannot be found?), to the *east.* The only way back to it was in a westward direction, or *upward!* Is there any confirmation of this? Yes! In the Lost Books of the Bible, in the book of Adam and Eve, it tells of Adam's many trips to the top of the highest mountain, where he stared longingly *up into* Eden (still 18 cubits out of reach), to which he so wished to return. Today when we die, we still go "west"!

Try reading Genesis through, applying the alphabet to all the words used, and prepare for many surprises. No matter how you use the alphabet, an intelligent application of it will immerse you in the most astounding revelations, and induce the most incredible brand of thinking, that you can well find the subject so enormous that it overcomes you.

I regret that simply giving the alphabet as I have here does not provide half enough information to render this magnificent tool truly effective. For instance, you must understand more fully the science behind the two letters T and D.

The Devil, the protagonist of the D-evil. Dis, the de that happens to the ego because of the

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sun. Tic, the science of growth. Vi, the energy of sex. Ar, the thing that makes a spirit shun the sun, the secret behind the reason we believe ghosts appear at night.

Fe, the female man! Refer to the passages quoted from the Bible in the foregoing, and note that Adam *did not name his wife* until *after* he had been banned! Then he named her Eve (Fe). The vital energy of sex (Vi). The *mother* of all the *living.*

Communications! A language that is not just a memorized jingle, a vulnerable set of symbols whose meaning can be lost in a flood, or a fire, or an exploding planet. The Alphabet of the Angles! The English alphabet! The alphabet of the Angels!

THE END

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ACCORDING TO YOU...

Our Monthly Letter Contest is ended—by order of you readers. You told me in no uncertain terms that you write because you want to and have something to say—not in competition for a prize. This innovation made a record. It was one nobody liked. So, a pox on letters for loot. "According To You" is back to the old stand.

Dear Editor:

In the May *Fantastic,* Jack Jones says, ". . . there are so many science fiction magazines on the market at present, you have to publish a good magazine to stay in circulation."

Now, either he and I haven't been reading the same magazines—which is hardly likely, because I read them all—or we disagree somewhat on what constitutes a good magazine. Some of the ones I've read lately haven't been what I would call good. That, in itself, is reason enough for me to welcome any change in any magazine. And not just one change, but a series of changes. Nothing on Earth improves without change, and that's particularly true of science fiction and science fiction magazines.

And, by the way, Jack, just who is "Mrs. Typical Housewife?" I know a lot of housewives, but none of them are typical. I also know a lot of *Fantastic* readers. None of them are typical, either. From the context, I assume you mean "Mrs. Typical Housewife" to be a rather uncomplimentary term, to be applied to a lady with no interest whatsoever in science fiction. If that's the case, what is she doing with a copy of *Fantastic? I* liked "Feud Woman." Does that make me a typical housewife? Let's not be flinging such inexact and unflattering terms around so carelessly, hmm?

Jack also says, "You could make *Fantastic* into a terrific magazine if you leave this present stuff alone and publish stories in the vein mentioned above." Granted, the vein mentioned is a fine one, but there are other veins equally fine. There are too many magazines on the market today devoted to one particular vein or another. Maybe that's why they haven't been so good lately. They're limiting themselves, and probably cheating their readers of some very fine stories that go begging for want of the "right market." Please, Paul, don't limit *Fantastic* that way. Keep it flexible and varied. It deserves at least that much.

Marian C. Oaks
8219 Belair Road
Lot 89, Road E
Baltimore 6, Md.

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● *You win $25.00, Mrs. Oaks, because you resent being called "typical." And you're right. Who wants to be a "typical" anything? Any housewife who doesn't set out to be the best one in existence isn't worth her salt. That goes for editors, bootblacks and bank robbers. Let's face it Mr. and Mrs. "Average Citizen" are phantoms. They don't exist.*

Dear Editor:

It seems to be the thing to write to *Fantastic* to comment on its new policy. I am impelled to write too after reading the May issue. Frankly, I don't like it, for reasons which might not be general enough to make any difference. But it seems to me your readers must be drawn from the group who read s-f fantasty. In this group there are those who prefer the more or less well-defined s-f, and those who prefer the fantastic or the "action" story. I belong to the former.

Reader Jack Jones, of St. Petersburg mentions the average age of the fan as 22, according to Moskowitz, but if I remember correctly the indefatigable Sam broke down the statistics to where they were a little more meaningful than this bald figure.

May I give you what is strictly my own analysis of this issue? The lead story, "The Invisible Man Murder Case," by Henry Slesar is well written, but the theme is hackneyed and not too well handled.

"The Illegitimate Egg"—fantasy, I suppose, and amateurishly done. The simple rugged honesty of the Johnsons was sickenly overdone.

"The Cheat"—unrealistic. Gave promise of some psi powers that never did appear, and the story turns out to be a very ordinary thing; sounds as though it is an incident from a book.

"Progress Zero"—I liked this one, though it won't bear analysis. Kronosiris (clever name) knew a detail such as the discovery of a formula by an obscure scientist, but he didn't know the man was destroyed in the most important scientific event in human history?

"Snake Pit"—a well written nothing at all.

"Two By Two"—I liked this one with no reservations.

"Spawn of the Dark One"—fuzzy fantasy.

"The Riddle of Levitation"—a good job in a short article, of a subject that could well use a book. Russell is always good.

Like all readers, I read what I like, but I have no time for froth on the fringes of two good fields of writing, s-f and fantasy. I have spent a lot of pleasant hours with *Fantastic*, and have by no means given up hope of spending many more.

Floyd W. Zwicky
Rockford, Ill.

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● *If the average science fiction fan is 22 years old, there are a great many child prodigies teaching science and engineering in American colleges. With all due deference to our good friend Moskowitz, I think the average age is closer to thirty than twenty. Your painstaking analysis of the issue wins $15.00, Mr. Zwicky.*

Dear Editor:

In a letter a while back to your magazine, I said that in the past two months *Fantastic* has been crummy. It has been like this until I received my May issue. This has a different twang to it. True there are some major goofs, but they can be ironed out.

I wish to point out the story "Snake Pit" by Lawrence Kingery. I will grant that it was a good story, story only, not science fiction or fantasy. It belonged in a man's magazine of some sort, not *Fantastic* so it is my view that this type of story does not belong. Let's try to remedy this situation.

The other stories were good, but the Levitation article was for a person who has little or no intelligence. Any child of three could have written it. I myself like Eric Frank Russell, but that was plain no good.

I like Henry Slesar's style of writing and hope to see more stories by him. Also would like to read more Silverberg.

Paul Shingleton, Jr.
320 26th St.
Dunbar, W. Va.

○ *Mr. Michaelson, our new publisher, didn't like "Snake Pit" either, which proves Ziff-Davis editors are allowed complete editorial freedom short of inviting libel. May we suggest a subscription would be an excellent way of spending your five bucks, Paul?*

Dear Editor:

I'd like to quote the best clinching paragraph from "The Creeping Coffins of Barbados": "Being sufficiently bigoted not to believe in supernatural powers, the writer refuses to believe—credit, that any coffins have been moved around anywhere by ghosties or evil beasties or things that go boomp in the night." Any electrician will probably agree he has something. I do not believe it is some "mysterious force."

Very clearly written it makes you think.

B. Courchesne
254 Lareshore Drive
Ferris via North Bay
Ontario, Canada

● *You're dead right, but what moved the coffins?*

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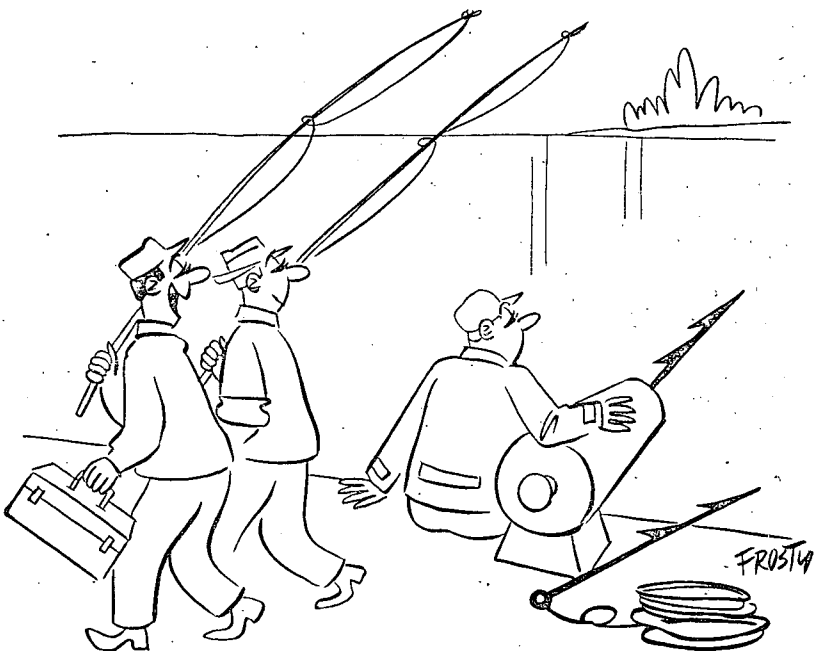
Dear Editor:

Now, you have the right idea: "Fact and Fiction." After all, readers of s-f are interested primarily in science which is a method of deductive logic built up on factual bases. Your readership will, undoubtedly, approve the new approach to their field of interest.

One could almost feel safe in predicting that science fiction and fantasy magazines of the future will be made up mostly of factual material, containing articles on the latest developments in technology and having perhaps one or two fiction stories in the lattermost pages of each issue.

Allan P. Steiger
4684 Landchester Rd.
Cleveland 9, Ohio

● *I hope the ratio never gets as lopsided as you predict, Allan. Being a fiction writer myself, my wife and kids have got a stake in this thing.*



"Now that's what I call an optimist."

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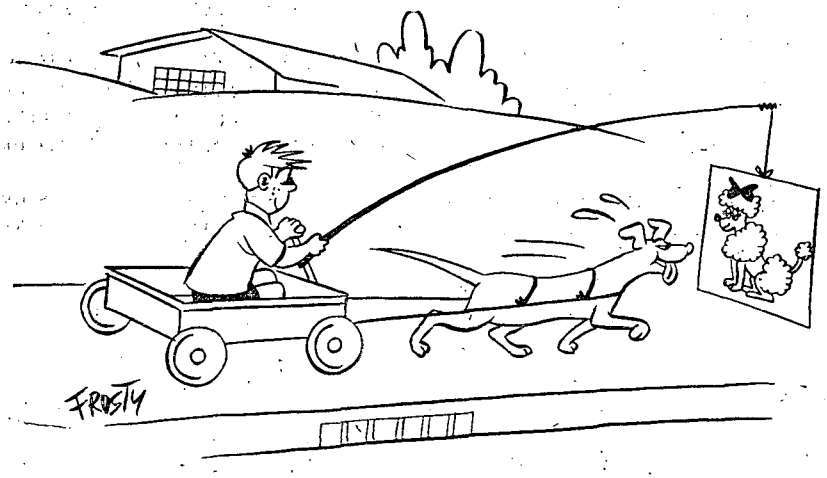

Dear Editor:

Each issue brings with it fiction which I feel is unsurpassed.

If the "Story?" about creeping coffins is the best fact material you people can find I suggest you stay with fiction. I feel we readers are interested in fact but I question whether we're interested in these things that took place 100 years ago. With all the fantastic strange fact stories of the present day, why waste good print on "old-hat?"

E. B. Green
356 Seaver St.
Dor. 21, Mass.

● *But Mr. Green, those darned coffins are still bouncing around down there.*

Dear Editor:

During 1957 your magazine was going downhill rapidly. But with the changes you have made in 1958, your magazine is again one of the top in the field. I can say the same for the new *Amazing*.

I especially liked the new stories "Feud Woman" and "The Cheat" which were used in the March and May issues.

Concerning the other stories in those two issues, I enjoyed reading "The Genie Takes A Wife" and "The Invisible Man Murder

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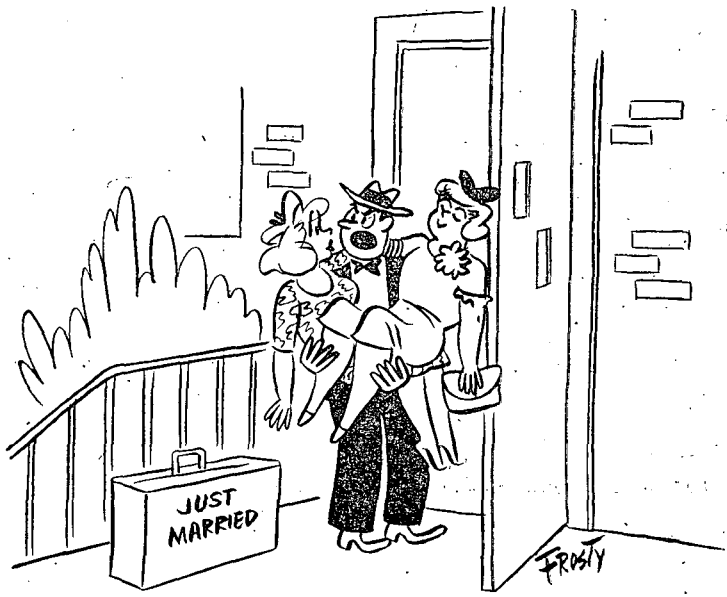
Case." But I have one question, Does Henry Slesar have a contract with you to turn out the lead stories in both *Fantastic* and *Amazing?*

Another thing that bothers me is your revival of the Shaver Mystery for the July *Fantastic*. I was reading both *Fantastic* and *Amazing* when the mystery started back in the 40's. I quit both magazines until the mystery was dropped. Let's keep it a fiction magazine and leave that crazy stuff out.

Keep *Fantastic* moving with the sort of stories you've been using this year and I'll continue to buy the magazine as long as I have any money left.

Eugene Bolin
716 East Seneca
Nowata, Oklahoma

● *We aren't reviving the Shaver Mystery in the sense you mean, Mr. Bolin. Just this one special issue in response to an unceasing demand over the years. By the way, are you a writer? Seems to me I remember your name on a manuscript that came through not long ago.*



"Isn't it enough I said she could live with us?"

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Dear Editor:

A very nice issue. I am speaking of the May *Fantastic*. Although the lead novel was a very good one, I enjoyed Bloch's short story more. The "new" *Fantastic* is progressing nicely, so I don't have any complaints. Eric Frank Russell's articles are helping a lot, and I hope you have more lined up for future issues.

Now I have an idea: why doesn't Frosty get together a portfolio of all of his cartoons featuring those two Martians?

I am nervously awaiting the Shaver Mystery issue.

Ted Pauls
1448 Meridene Dr.
Baltimore 12, Md.

© *Relax, Ted. This is the Shaver Issue. And here's a tip: duck out and buy another one if you can find it because more likely than not some disappointed friend will be around trying to con you out of this one. You know—"Just to read overnight," and that's the last you'll ever see of it.*

"Say when?"

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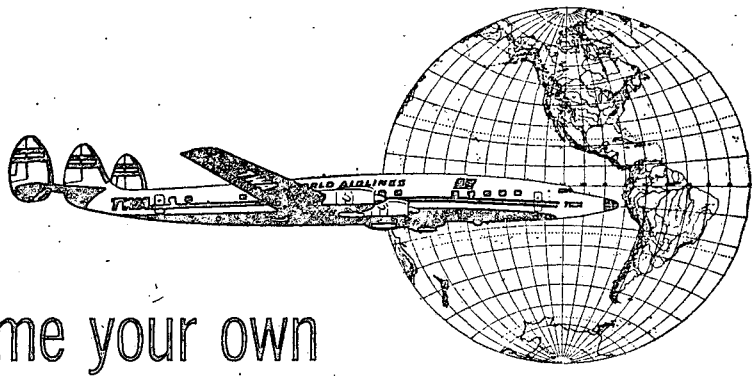

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THE EDITOR'S VIEWPOINT

(Continued from page 5)

So we answer what we interpret as reader-mandate with this special issue—but do so reluctantly. That word, *reluctantly,* may well be grounds for the question: *All right, if you're not happy about publishing a Shaver issue, why do you do it?* The answer is quite simple. If we refused to recognize what must be rated as a mandate we would be putting ourselves in the position of saying in effect: *What is certainly the majority of our readership have voiced a desire to look further into the subject. But we personally, feeling it to be without logical foundation, will sit complacently back and act as though the subject hadn't been brought up at all.* There is certainly an absence of integrity in such an attitude.

We believe that a great bulk of inquiry came from readers who think as we do. Thus, we are not alone and in that we take comfort, while sincerely conceding to others the right to believe as they choose.

Our proof of this sincerity is the turning over of the Mystery's defense to men who believe utterly and absolutely in its authenticity.

After all, who could defend it more ably than Ray Palmer and Richard S. Shaver himself? We have known Ray Palmer for years. He has proven himself a devoted friend many times and while we wish him every good luck in converting the unbelievers, it would be hypocritical not to state editorially our complete nonacceptance of the Shaver Mystery.

However, we give Ray a platform from which to state his case, and knowing him as we do, he would ask no more.

So here is the Shaver Mystery, expanded upon as completely as the book-size will allow. Your reactions to the editorial job done herein will be appreciated.—PWF

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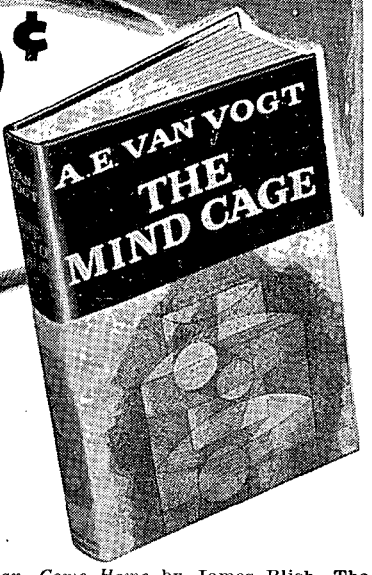
THIS STARTLING VISIT TO A FUTURE WORLD



—Continued from Back Cover

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Slowly the strange events come back to you. Trask had been granted the customary last week of freedom before his execution. Escape would of course be impossible for him. The government had complete control over his body—thanks to the electronic pain circuit "printed" on his shoulder. Yet when you went to see the scientist, you found him wildly defiant of the court's verdict!

Victim of a Diabolical Invention!

Trask explained he had at last perfected his incredible new invention, and with it could oppose the entire earth government! He urged you to join him in a *conspiracy to overthrow the government.* You indignantly refused, and the last thing you remember was—complete blackout.

As you gradually awaken, the nature of Trask's invention becomes terrifyingly clear to you. You are the living proof he's succeeded in "switching" two human minds! And now Trask, as David Marin, will remain free—while you, in the body of Wade Trask, WILL GO TO THE EXECUTION CHAMBER!

—CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE

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This SCIENCE-FICTION Thriller

THE MIND CAGE

by A. E. VAN VOGT

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